

"Correspondance" is an apocalyptic poem in this sense, though not one of a Christinn type, as Christianity never thought of revelation as coming through nature in this way. An apocalypse may be an "illusion", whatever such a word may mean in literature, but it is hard to understand many aspects of Romanticism without taking the illusion into account. Yet apocalypse always included, or was never far from, a sense of a total disruption of the habits of sense experience, a vision of a total removal of meaning in which the sun was turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Again, the underlying structure of a history of ideas, and of a series of imaginative deconstructions of those ideas, seems to be missing from de Man's argument. And without it one is hesitant to believe that the sense of nature as a *gouffre du néant* (combining two titles from Baudelaire) is really a "fundamentally new" relation between the objective and the conscious worlds.

Another variation of the central issue appears in a somewhat simpler form in an essay on Yeats that takes up about a third of the book. This essay, "Image and Emblem in Yeats", is early, and evidently formed part of a doctoral dissertation. Yeats's early poetry, according to this essay, used an emblematic type of image to suggest a verbally and mythologically self-enclosed world. An example of such an image is the sea-shell, the natural object that suggests by its echoing, not the objective world, but the created one that grows out of the poet himself. Similarly swans and peacocks have more to do with aristocratic beauty and disciplined movement than with birds. The conventional view of Yeats, de Man says, is that from about *Responsibilities* (1914) on he began to use more "natural" imagery and so gave signs of rooting himself in the "real world". The thesis of de Man's essay seems to be that the problem of the emblematic image kept haunting Yeats to the end of his life: so it did, but I wish he had said so without incorporating so many perversa readings of Yeats.

The essay deals very little with the two Byzantium poems, but when the narrator of "Sailing to Byzantium" announced that once he was safely in the "artifice of eternity" he would not take his new form from "any natural thing", Sturge Moore protested that his "artificial" images were just as "natural", if in a different way, as those evoking the world left behind. True—the sea-shell also, for example, is both a natural thing and an artefact—but we get different emphases in imagery all the same. It seems to me, using de Man's terms, that the chestnut tree at the end of "Among School Children" is a natural "image" and that the leaf-and-fire tree with Attis' image on it at the beginning of "Vaccillation" is an emblematic tree. The function of the first is to resolve the antitheses of Plato and Aristotle, nuns and mothers, transfiguration and rebirth, soul and body, votive candles and children, holy presence and self-born mockers, that the earlier part of the poem sets out. Along with the dancer, this tree represents a permanent integration or unity of being that we can neither attain nor leave alone. The tree is there, but not conscious; the dancer is conscious, but cannot go on dancing indefinitely.

The function of the "Vaccillation" tree, in contrast, with its mythical (*Mabinogion*) ancestry, is to announce the theme of the conflict of heroism and sanctity that the narrator, in common with the rest of the human race, who are all part of Attis' image, "vacillates" between. But de Man insists that the two trees are the same, and that the leaf, blossom and bole of the chestnut correspond to the lushness, the fire and the Attis image of the second. He also maintains that Yeats was absorbed by the beauty of Byzantine culture to the point of repudiating the Platonic sense of an immanent *Eros* in his later work. The fact that practically all Yeats's poetry and his explicit statements on the subject say the exact opposite is evidently just resistance or defensiveness. But surely Yeats is *par excellence* the poet who realized that no one can do without either images or emblem and still be a poet: he repudiates the way of the saint, not for being what it is, but because it destroys the poetic impulse by renouncing even emblematic images. Byzantine art itself is not anti-*eros* or super-*eros* (it is a later development of the union of the *eros* and the mathematical which, according to "The Statues", was planned by Pythagoras as

well as practised by Phidias).

What is true, I think, and what gives the essay cogency in spite of its dubious readings, is that, for example, the chestnut tree, as a natural image, resonates against the emblematic tree of "Vaccillation" and its counterparts elsewhere. For Yeats there are two worlds, out of many, that particularly concern the poet. The poet's workshop is the preposterous "pig of a world" we see about us, and the "foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart" that we see within us. But there is also an emblematic world of beauty and dignity that can be invoked, and it gives meaning to what the poet struggles with in roping his pig. The result is the aesthetic-violence interaction described so clearly in the Kleist essay. In "Sailing to Byzantium" there is a distant vision of unflawed beauty and order; in "Byzantium", the view of the process behind this construction, there is a kind of alchemical blast-furnace burning up the blood and filth of human life.

The earlier *Blindness and Insight* was a much more theoretical book, concerned mainly with such critics as Poulet, Derrida, Binswanger, Blanchot and Lukács. Some readers felt that it was also a rather negative book, setting out all the things that words can't and shouldn't be expected to do, and giving the effect of a ceaseless driving around a strange city in a tangle of one-way streets and unmarked dead-ends. I don't feel this: I feel that it is concerned to show that the conflict of ideologies in Romanticism I spoke of springs from a sense that the old subject-object paradigm of experience did not work any more, at any rate in anything approximating literature. The reader is not a simple subject: the text he is reading is not a simple object. We may postulate a verbal world intermediate between subject and object, but that creates a fresh set of difficulties: one may easily treat a verbal structure as though it were a natural object, as the "formalists" do when they make a cult of organic wholeness. Poems are organic wholes for the same reason that pills are round: not because roundness is their essence, but because that shape favours assimilation.

The word "blindness" suggests the fable of the six blind men and the elephant. Some critics seize on the prophetic element in Romanticism, others on the impersonality or transcendence of the subject, others the redemptive potential in literature in leading us to God or Marx. All these are "rhetorics of blindness", in the sense that the elephant does have a trunk and a tail besides being an elephant, and the fact that he is perceived to have these things constitutes an insight. But who can show us the real and the whole beast?

Most Romantic-centred critics have one figure that they use as a Virgilian guide through its contradictory mazes, and for de Man that figure is Rousseau. He says, basing the statement on Hölderlin but clearly endorsing most of it himself, that "It is Rousseau's turning away from sense perception towards the 'sentiment of existence' that he [Hölderlin] sees as the crucial moment in the development of Western thought". And later, "Rousseau represents a turning point in the history of Western consciousness because he was the first to attempt a way out of this impasse". That is, the impasse created by the subject-object duality in which the objective is the master.

The second half of *Allegories of Reading* concentrates entirely on Rousseau, and in *Blindness and Insight* the crucial essay is concerned with Derrida's deconstruction of Rousseau's essay on the origins of writing—a very carefully selected text from Derrida's point of view. Assuming that the central aim of deconstruction is to reveal the assumptions, more particularly the "unconscious" assumptions, underlying what a writer is saying through his choice of metaphor and images, Rousseau, according to de Man, does not need any such deconstruction, because he knows from the first that he is creating a fiction and not asserting objective truth. In other words, every work of Rousseau is best deconstructed by reading his other works.

If I was explaining this situation in my own words, I should say that an ideology expresses secondary and derivative human concerns, and that what ideologies are derived from is mythology, which expresses the primary desires of existence, along with the emotions attached to their frustration. This real object of



Grass in Rain, Glacier Bay National Monument, Alaska, 1948; the photograph is reproduced from Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight* (400pp. Thames and Hudson, £35.00/\$41.11). The book will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

deconstruction, then, is to reveal the mythological basis under the ideology, and the writers least in need of such analysis are the great reshapers of myth, of whom Rousseau is obviously one. I doubt that this is really so far removed from de Man's view, whatever his visceral reaction to the word myth would have been. I introduce the point because ideology is always nostalgic for the past or expectant of the future, or both, whereas mythology transposes everything into a present directly confronting the reader. Hence the immense importance, for understanding Rousseau's historical function, of the passage in the fifth walk of the *Reveries*, where he speaks of the superlative happiness gained by a self-recollecting consciousness dwelling purely in the present, with no chains binding it to future or past. De Man understands the importance of this passage for Hölderlin's view of Rousseau: he even understands its importance in itself, but some lurking secularized sense of original sin seems to prevent him from coming to grips with it.

Readers' digest

Chris Baldick

RAMAN SELDEN
A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory
153pp. Brighton: Harvester. £15.95 (paperback, £4.95)
07108 06582

The high moral seriousness of so much British literary criticism has been founded upon an equal and opposite flippancy, an amateur casualness in matters theoretical. In France, and increasingly the United States too, the equation has been reversed: theoretical systems of forbidding solemnity and rigour support a critical celebration of "laughter" in the work of Hélène Cixous or of playful *Jouissance* in that of Roland Barthes. The British, however, have been learning to fortify themselves with the bitter pill of literary theory, prepared in ever smaller but more concentrated doses. Methuen's New Accents series, now running to some twenty titles, continues to provide stimulating and critical introductions to modern theoretical issues, but these slim volumes are lavishly prolix by comparison with Raman Selden's *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, which manages with surprising success to condense into 150 pages the essential concepts of the Formalist, Marxist, structuralist, post-structuralist, feminist, and reception schools without crudely simplifying any of them.

Some kinds of modern theory lend themselves to brief summary more easily than others, of course: the rigid symmetries of high structuralism favouring the reduction of everything under the sun to a rectangular diagram, or the most familiar and post-structuralist theories prefer to leak and slide in unpredictable directions. What is surprising in Selden's

nutshell account is not so much that the merit of Jakobson's work on metaphoricality is clearer than most other matters, but that he has succinctly caught and mimated the protean movements of de Man and Kristeva too. It is with the eclecticism and genially dialectical thinking of the Western Marxist tradition that Selden's method of abrupt *précis* tends to break down. A paranoiac log-jam? his two dense paragraphs on Walter Benjamin will be a good deal more accessible to most readers than a expanded account would have been. The argument of Fredric Jameson's *The Unconscious* is barely recognizable in the summarized version; the rest of the book, though, is remarkable for its clarity and fulfil in its recommendations for further reading.

The only pity is that Selden has not put himself more room to explain, compare, or contend with the theoretical he so carefully summarized. There are some dissenting asides on reception theory, cautionary words on deconstruction, and in theory, establish a hierarchy of Selden notes, "but in practice it seeks to be as far as the eye can reach" the rest of the *précis*. This is the ideal crash course, a refresher course for readers seeking a condensed presentation of current theory, but strictly speaking it is not a guide. New Accents volumes are, and as Jameson's and David Robey's *Modern Literary Theory* (1982) and Terry Eagleton's *Walter Benjamin* (1983). The book is referred to in that coyly oblique manner, "recent work" which the BBC reserves for commercial rivals, and appears only in Selden's numerous, and overlapping, lists. One need not be a Marxist adept to find an intertextual "absence" mined by the pressures of what is now a crowded corner of the publishing market.

David B. Greene

DONALD MITCHELL
Gustav Mahler: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death: Interpretations and annotations
399pp. Faber. £35.
071136346

Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death, the third volume in Donald Mitchell's projected series of four books on Gustav Mahler and his music, takes up the vocal and choral music written between 1901 and 1909. The first volume (*The Early Years*) sifts the biographical evidence pertaining to the first twenty years of Mahler's life and examines the origins and style of his compositions from that period. The second (*The Wunderhorn Years*) has much less biographical information, aiming instead to establish the chronology of the various stages of Mahler's work on the first four symphonies and the *Lieder* written between 1880 and 1900; it also contains some aspects of the style of his music. The new volume has three parts, one each for the Rückert songs (including the five that constitute the *Kindertotenlieder*), *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Eighth Symphony. The concluding volume will address itself to the remaining symphonies.

The changes in format from one volume to the next show Dr Mitchell adapting his objectives to changes in the nature of the materials with which he is dealing—both the music itself and other scholars' work on it. Perhaps responding as well to critics' complaints that *The Wunderhorn Years* was more notes towards a book than a finished monograph, in *Songs and Symphonies* he offers sustained analyses of particular pieces and makes an effort to define what is characteristic and distinctive about Mahler's instrumentation, his approach to form, and his ways of endowing musical gestures with poetic, symbolic meanings. Mitchell manages to let various pieces illumine one another without impugning the intrinsic value of any of them, and is able to identify a feature as typical without deprecating the uniqueness of individual instances of it. He differentiates the music of 1901–09 from the *Wunderhorn* music without implying that the stylistic break is absolute.

Each of the three parts has two sections: Interpretations (both Mahler's interpretations of his text and Mitchell's interpretations of Mahler) and Annotations (minor interpretative comments, investigations of manuscript sources and remarks about other Mahler scholars' and critics' remarks). Mitchell's interest in integrating the results of his archival research with his analysis of the music and its poetic meanings leads him to put a good deal of extraneous material in the interpretative sections. For example, he traces the sources of the texts set in *Das Lied* as a way of highlighting the differences between the poems with which Mahler began and his expanded, transformed versions of them. Although aligning him with Joseph Kerman's hope for a broader, more humanistic musicology, this programme can work against itself: by interweaving the two kinds of analysis, Mitchell sometimes makes both of them so hard to follow that the weight of the one bearing on the other is not felt (for example, arguments about just how quickly Mahler wrote the "Veni Creator" of the Eighth Symphony are intricately intertwined with arguments about the form of this hymn).

"Decoding *Das Lied*", as Mitchell calls his Part Two, is longer by far than the other two parts together. However the Rückert songs both as exquisite works of art in their own right and as preliminary studies to which Mahler prepared himself, as it turned out, to compose *Das Lied*. The scale profile drawn by the orchestra in "Um Mitternacht" and "Ich atme" ein andelndes Duff" is important to these songs' atmosphere, for example, and is even more important to the autumnal mist in the second song of *Das Lied*. The "heterophonic principle" whereby a sort of counterpoint is created by putting two unison parts out of synchronization with one another is important both to "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" and in a far more elaborate and extended way to "Der Abschied" at the end of *Das Lied*: in each case the technique creates a moment (or passage) of clarity that resolves the work's

principal tensions. The technique may also be a nod to the Chinese origin of the poems set in *Das Lied*; the great Viennese musicologist, Mahler's friend Guido Adler (in an essay of 1908 that Mitchell reproduces in an appendix), noted the importance of heterophony in oriental music.

Even more significantly, the structural features of the *Kindertotenlieder* as a cycle may be seen as the model for the overall organization of the six songs of *Das Lied*. In both cycles, the first and last songs form a frame; the first song establishes the cycle's tensions; their resolution, while forecast in the opening song, is withheld until the last song, which is the longest. Mahler creates a strophic form in all but one song in each cycle, and his handling of strophic form (dichotomizing the first strophe into two opposed sections and using it as an exposition that is repeated, with many subtle and significant variations, by the second strophe, developed by the next one or more and recapitulated in the last) links together several songs within each cycle as well as the cycles to each other.

Although the Eighth Symphony was written before and is longer than *Das Lied*, analysis of the Eighth occupies a final and comparatively short place in the book. For Mitchell, this chapter is an afterword: its function is to further the interpretation of *Das Lied* by citing differences. Where *Das Lied* has dichotomy, the Eighth has counter-character; where *Das Lied* has conflict, the Eighth has contrast. While the form of *Das Lied* is generated by tension and shaped by groping painfully towards a resolution that is as complete as the path to it seems uncertain to one struggling along it, the form of the Eighth is what Mitchell calls a compilation—"part anthology, part coalition . . . a diverse array of forms, genres, techniques and styles". Mitchell suggests that Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* (1880) is a preliminary study in this method.

Mahler's model for the first movement was the Bach motet. Disagreeing with those critics who relate the second movement to the conventional symphonic procession of Adagio, Scherzo and Finale, Mitchell hears it as a compilation of prelude, secular cantata (when the chorus enters), sacred oratorio (beginning with the Pater Ecstasius music), choral song (boys' chorus), and music drama (advent of Mater Gloriosa and Chorus mysticus). The variety of styles enlivens and indeed projects the continuous unfolding of a single, unifying idea—the unceasing aspiration for enlightenment.

The most daunting challenge for the Mahler scholar lies in Mahler's own challenges to his listeners to understand themselves differently. For many of Mitchell's readers, they themselves and their response to Mahler are far more problematic than the music. Nowadays its appeal is so profound and so nearly universal that the angry audiences at some of its first European performances are interestingly enigmatic: was the music so badly performed? Does understanding Mahler require a sense of the apocalyptic that was underdeveloped before 1914? These questions are the other side of listeners' questions about themselves seventy years later: what is it about us that makes this music matter so much so quickly? Is it because we have questions that are common to all humanity? Is our response eschatological, as Carl Schorske suggests, radically de-idealizing political expectations? Several aspects of Mitchell's work speak to Mahler's challenge to the listener.

First, Mitchell analyses the experience of listening to this music; he does not analyse the music as a static entity abstracted from real people's real ears. He describes the understanding of tensions along the way to resolution; he does not describe them only in hindsight. He pays attention to the way gestures change in time; he does not assume that a motif of timbre does or ought to mean to a listener on its first occurrence what it is going to mean to subsequent ones. He notices when a passage functions as a restatement in relation to what has preceded it; but also as a transition in relation to what follows it. He emphasizes that experiencing the music in these ways allows it to generate often radically new kinds of poetic and symbolic meanings. He intends that the keys to his interpretations be those sure-footed Mahlerian gestures by which any reasonably

attentive listener should be moved and effected. Although his archival enthusiasms occasionally lead him to overstate the audible significance of an event, he generally keeps faith with this intention. Even so, one may sometimes protest that he has not correctly identified the audibly conspicuous features (he seems, for example, not to give enough weight to the abrupt shift in mood effected by landing briefly on the sunny, relaxed D major—the major subdominant in A minor—in the tenor's opening line of the "Trinklied" of *Das Lied*).

Second, listeners typically assume that Mahler's music means to them what it meant to its composer and that they can infer that meaning from his biography. They look to his life to explain their response to his music. In accordance with this assumption, Mitchell judiciously relates Mahler's sense of himself to his music, in particular linking the composition of *Das Lied* to the question of his living put to him by his dying.

Mitchell is not, however, so philosophically naive as to believe that he can recover Mahler's own hearing of his music. Although Mitchell, like most music analysts, does not concern himself with hermeneutical issues as explicitly as literary critics do, he knows well that no critic's ear is innocent of its predecessors' interpretations. Turns of phrase implicitly about the listeners and their interests have got into the very air that carries the sound of Mahler's music. Mitchell concurs with some of these without overtly expressing agreement, and others he is not pains to debunk. Many of both sorts go back to Paul Bekker's book on Mahler's symphonies (1921), the earliest attempt to label the forms and the salient moments of every movement. Although Bekker and others are usually not addressed by name, they have set Mitchell's agenda. They have sent him on a search for better nomenclature that would be far less urgent were he not sure that labels, with their implications about the nature of the musical process and their analogies to other experiences, do in fact control listeners' interpretations both of the music and of themselves.

These interests draw Mitchell to Theodor Adorno's monograph of 1960 on the interpretation of society embodied in Mahler's music. Although there are sharp disagreements, Mitchell surprises himself at times by discovering significant parallels between his and Adorno's analyses of *Das Lied*.

Mary Dargie in her book on the Mahler songs (Bern, 1981), makes many of the same points as Mitchell about the Rückert *Lieder*. But the rhetorical contrast is marked; and, noting this difference takes one to the very core of Mitchell's project. Dargie's concise, lucid style holds the music in front of the reader like an object to be contemplated and comprehended. Mitchell's style is laboured. He repeats himself, exaggerates, rescinds the exaggeration and then reinstates it, struggling to describe a form and its symbolic meaning. He gives the reader the impression that he has not quite managed to say what needs to be said, but that the very failure does after all say exactly what he wants. The writing will not permit the music to settle down as a fixed object.

Readers may wish that Mitchell had written more—that he had more definitively interpreted the denouement of "Der Abschied", had redefined the term "resolution" to fit the contentlessness of Mahler's ending and had expanded on the poetic-symbolic effect of telescoping transitions into restatements. They may also wish he had written less; so that what is really important might stand out unambiguously. Both wishes are justified. Going very far towards meeting them, however, might well have required Mitchell to fix the music as an object and abstract it from the listening subject. The book could then well have become a *Mahler's Vocal and Choral Music Written between 1901 and 1909* (linking its title from the opening of this review), and not a *Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death*. As it is, Mitchell has written about what Mahler wrote about.

In *Turn of the Century Masters* (324pp. Macmillan, £11.95, 0 333 385411), one of a series of biographies derived from *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the four composers discussed are: Janáček, Mahler, Richard Strauss and Sibelius.

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Deep-southern sweetness

Fernanda Eberstadt

EUGENE WALTER
The Untidy Pilgrim
 250pp. £9.50 (paperback, £3.95).
 0413 553302
The Byzantine Riddle
 188pp. £8.95 (paperback, £3.50).
 0413 553108
 Methuen.

The career of Eugene Walter has been a varied if rather old-fashioned one. Born in Mobile, Alabama, he was raised as a member of a children's theatre and as a young man ran a marionette show which toured the United States; he published his first novel, *The Untidy Pilgrim*, in 1954, and on the strength of its warm critical reception became an expatriate, living the next thirty years in Paris and Rome, where he designed theatre and carnival sets, illustrated books, took cameo roles in Fellini films and published occasional fiction, poems and essays – before returning to Mobile where he now writes cookery books and paints.

Perhaps because of the variety of his career, perhaps because his rather gentle talent has been obscured by more explosive masters of Southern whimsy such as Truman Capote and James Purdy, Eugene Walter is virtually unknown today. It is thus a particular and unexpected pleasure to have Methuen's reprint of *The Untidy Pilgrim* (first published in 1955) and their edition of his later short stories, *The Byzantine Riddle*.

The Untidy Pilgrim (the title refers to the human heart) tells of a young man from Northern cotton-country Alabama (although names are all-important in Walter's world, we are never told the narrator's) who arrives in the big city of Mobile – a port town on the Gulf of Mexico which Walter has elsewhere described as "basically Catholic, Frenchified in the last analysis, and certainly fun-loving". There he makes the acquaintance of a world, spanning three generations, of vivid eccentrics and narcissists, wise black servants and cold-hearted young schemers. They include his landlady, the ancient and outspoken sentimentalist Miss Ninetta Ffifield; his cousin and nemesis Perrin Moreland, a Machiavellian cherub on leave from Bohemian debauchery in New York; the worldly young lady Phyllis (hair black as India ink, with a bewitching mole on her chin, a mouth full of sweet nothings, and red lipstick "I could have eaten off there and then"); Koala Reynolds, the mischievous boy-chasing old painter who is in permanent mourning for the death of his poodle Baudouin; and Uncle Acis, a country gentleman and a skylark, "wholly angelic, wholly hot-headed".

The novel's action moves in slow swoops. The hero, falling for Phyllis, is thereby introduced to the delights of carnal relations with a young lady of his own class and to the torments of appreciating modern art. When cousin Perrin steals Phyllis away, the hero follows the couple to New York, where, disillusioned with Phyllis, he comes to realize how firmly his heart belongs with the old folks at home. In the second half of the novel, which unfolds during a long-drawn-out house-party at Uncle Acis's house in Bayou Clair, the narrator becomes a man. Acis dies, the narrator marries his young widow and exorcizes the demon Perrin in a fist-fight. (It is typical of Walter's love of excess that the ravishing Perrin not only gets his nose broken in battle, but in a final fall from grace, runs the fat while recuperating.)

The Untidy Pilgrim is a rich, fragrant, sentimental novel, full of sharp Southern slang, spirited dialogue and unexpectedly majestic descriptions. Regarding this slow and often stately tale, loaded with tart digressions on the power of regret, the absurdity of abstract art and modern verse, the loathsomeness of "ladies that are biggity" and the charm of ladies with opinions, one sometimes loses the path for the camellias. In its delight in perversity and its sometimes swooning eroticism, the book calls to mind the seventeenth-century poet who is much invoked in it, Robert Herrick (not to mention some camp Southern artists closer to hand). But an antidote to such excessively rambling sweetness lies in the narrator himself, a mule-headed country boy whose bad temper, sour tongue and determined philistinism save

The Untidy Pilgrim from preciousness. The novel seems old-fashioned not so much for the courtliness of its prose and its delicious rhythms but for its tribute to gentler virtues which one is unaccustomed to seeing honoured in contemporary fiction: tact, courtesy, reticence, hospitality, calm, right relations and the respecting of one's elders.

The stories collected under the title *The Byzantine Riddle* range from a Civil War extravaganza about the fatal love of an old Cuban madam for a young, devil-may-care Alabamian blockade-runner, through an E. F. Benson-like narrative about a catastrophic garden party and an anecdote about Soviet tourists in Egypt, to the journey through hell of a young soldier at the end of the Second World War, just demobilized from three years' service in Alaska, who lands in Hollywood for a few nights of sin and stardom. The stories are uneven in quality. Convincing character portrayal is not in any case Walter's strong suit, and in addition to this deficiency, some of the tales suffer from not having been fixed in a particular time. Put in an indefinite although presumably modern South, the heroes and heroines of the less successful sketches seem to be lounging about in "period" costume during a permanent intermission.

The best stories in this collection are those which address themselves to a specific setting and era – and one deeply familiar to Walker: the Deep South of the late 1930s and early 40s. "Troubadour", a story which recalls Harper Lee's Alabama novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, tells of a small and poker-faced boy who wins the hearts of a crusty old bachelor and his sister by retailing blood-curdling lies as to how his jail-bird father shot his mother dead for her infidelity. In "The Kewpie Doll" – possibly Walter's finest piece of work – a censored young orphan, volunteering for work in a Reformatory Camp in up-country Mississippi to escape from the memory of the deaths he has endured, finds himself assigned to painting the coffins of the dead infants of poor backwoodsmen. At his best, Walter combines a rare poignancy with bitingly vivid dialogue and an almost Augustan staidness; at his worst, he is still pleasant to read, and good-tempered. It is a pity that both these volumes are marred by an uncountable number of typographical errors which confuse the reader and often corrupt the text.

The disconnected view

Roz Kaveney

DONDELLLO
White Noise
 326pp. Picador, £9.95.
 0330 291092

When Jack Gladney, head of a prestigious University Department of Hitler Studies where he teaches Advanced Nazism, is faced with the potential social embarrassment of hosting a conference in his field while having no German, our response is merely to shake our heads and say "That so, that so". This comic effect, our belated recognition that our outrage has been disconnected, is one that has long been familiar to American comedians and a few of Don DeLillo's throwaways – "There is no Hitler building as such" – have the air of our takes from a Mel Brooks film. There is a sense in much modern life that almost anything, perhaps especially anything horrid, that might be imagined will turn up as a logical and unforeseen consequence of earlier social trends. DeLillo takes this and builds round it a gentle fiction dominated by the appropriate lack of surprise, even by bland resignation. He used similar effects less well in an earlier novel, *Running Dog*, where they were combined with a parody of spy thrillers; in that particular genre, moral sensibilities have a tendency to be so blunted already that parodic use of it is no longer a forceful way of making the point.

White Noise is more in the mainstream of contemporary American fiction: the principal characters are academics or their children or previous marriages. Much of it is concerned with the mundane – though at times the mundane is turned to worrying confusion, as when

Trying to settle down

John Clute

PHILIP K. DICK
In Milton Lumky Territory
 213pp. Gollancz, £8.95.
 0575 036257

Out of the deep past comes *In Milton Lumky Territory*. The world it depicts – a backwater precinct of Eisenhower's America – is long gone. And Philip K. Dick, who wrote the book in 1958 but never managed to find a publisher for it, is also gone. After a narrowing career in science fiction – much of his finest work was published in the sort of paperback original that is treated as ephemeral and trashed – he died in 1982, aged fifty-three, a writer of considerable genius; a hack. He was, just then, on the verge of fame.

In *Milton Lumky Territory* is one of the novels Dick composed at the beginning of his career in a prolonged and completely unsuccessful attempt to become a respectable author of respectable non-genetic fictions dealing with the "real" world. There are probably as many as a dozen of these novels, and within ten years the extremely energetic Dick estate will have managed to get most of them published. None of those already available is bad (though none of them has anything of the vatic ferocity of the science fiction) and *Lumky* is the best of the lot so far.

The time is 1957, just before the Interstate Highway system began to transform America into a grid of endless and anonymous freeways. As roving buyer for a Reno discount warehouse, Skip Stevens roams obsessively a vast triangular territory whose points are Boise, Idaho, Portland, Oregon and San Francisco. He is wedded to his 1955 Mercury (the Gollancz cover, which shows what seems to be a 1957 Chevrolet, blurs an essential point, for Merc drivers are a different breed from Chev drivers, at least they were in those days) and is only really comfortable when he is on the road, his troubles behind him and before him an intricate maze of routes. But he is twenty-four, and is beginning to sense the need to settle down properly.

Back in his home stamping-ground of Boise, he meets and falls in love with his old grade-school teacher, ten years his elder, and they

in a stunning code to the novel, the local supermarket rearranges its shelves, and regulars mill around, uncertain as to the location of scouring pads and cream of wheat. When this world is disrupted by the melodramatic (Gladney's shooting of the scientist who has abused his research in order to seduce Gladney's wife Babbette) or the apocalyptic (the menacing of the town in general and Gladney in particular by a cloud of toxic waste); the tone continues to be one of routine coping, and of mild intrigued amusement. Gladney is an attractive protagonist, at least because his responses are all of a piece; he makes no exceptions to his moral and emotional detachment, neither for his own approaching death nor for Babbette's use of dangerous experimental medication, hardly even for their toddler son's crossing of the local freeway on his plastic tricycle. There are metaphysical aspects to all of this (Babbette is trying to cure herself of the fear of death, even at the risk of dying; the chemicals that are killing Gladney may well take more than his natural life span to do so), but they have no resonance in this muted atmosphere of intellectual cool.

DeLillo does not make the mistake of resting on the power and validity of these ideas and observations, or of embodying them only in static, one-ideaers. His prose is as coolly observant of concrete detail, as obsessed with intellectual balance, as his central character is, whether the matter to hand is a technique for administering drugs or the arrival of students in an endless line of station wagons full of commodities. In the knitted, mocking dialogue of preoccupied children, we hear a blur of ellipsis and accustomed familial affection and regard; this is an alternative and un sentimental focus of our response to the novel.

marry. He takes over her typewriter, meets Milton Lumky, a travelling salesman, by his advancing years into a more scouting of the territory for some reason. Life has had meaning. Lumky is who he becomes if he fails to survive the claustrophobia of marriage, his wife's mood-shifts, and the store's inability to pay him income.

Skip and Lumky finally embark on a mild-mannered fugue, a doomed journey to Ireland that Francis Stuart elected to spend the years of the Second World War in Germany late self-abandonment. But at the last accounts for some of the living down he has been required to do. Long after Pound had been released from St Elizabeth's, whether his calm coda, as seen becoming modernist, is seen as a small business man in a world he will not comprehend. Lumky dies in the wilderness, D.C. simple, succinct, often quite like *Milton Lumky Territory* takes on a microcosm, washes it clean and sets it on a path between self-justification and the muted is perhaps too respectable to frighten or minimize anyone. In writing the book, Dick's protagonist – seemed to be trying to date to a decent life. Skip was perhaps down. It is our gain that the author of *The High Castle* had no such luck.

Divided but unscarred

Alice Kavounas

SUSAN FROMBERG SCHAEFFER
Mahland
 285pp. Hamish Hamilton, £9.95.
 0241 116430

It is impossible to dislike Eleanor, the heroine of *Mahland*, even though at first she seems another of those irritating superior of the 1980s: successful author, teacher, married mother of two, and, at first, beautiful as well. But Susan Fromberg Schaeffer endows her central character with a special brand of self-deprecating wit which, to the Dodgers, is Brooklyn's most legacy to the world.

Like everyone born in Brooklyn, she has a Jewish mother. Also a Jewish mother. What's worse, they suddenly disappear, continuing to exist long after their deaths, two fractious ghosts who haunt Eleanor as she tries to live her life in a world of the living. The struggle has obviously absorbed her throughout her years of trying to grow up, which, according to her latest article on myth of adulthood, no one ever does. She is as more dangerous now than before.

Tom, her incredibly understanding band, sums up his wife at one point: "The first mat you, you were always hanging on your mother. I was very impressed. A Jewish girl, hanging up on her mother. I know what you were capable of."

Well, quite a lot, as it turns out. Eleanor embarks on an affair with a Chilean named Tom, and his intricate world of night to her inner vision sharpening as perceptions dim. Schaeffer avoids leaning heavily on the symbolism of this. Instead, she keeps the pace of the narrative steady, doesn't allow even Eleanor's adultery to en the moral tone. It's debatable whether the author intended *Mahland* to be more than a enjoyable read. It is Eleanor's passion for and her conflict would have to have been ten with much more strength of feeling for novel to cut deeper. It's impossible, perhaps inappropriately, to be won over by Eleanor's divided loyalty when she seems merely troubled by it. The political her free-wheeling attitude within her "old-fashioned" code is what draws us to Eleanor, and she does learn by the end "there was a price to pay after all". But an author like, say, Ramona Butler can't laugh out loud as she twists the knife. Schaeffer's hell is her own.

Promoting passion

John Melmoth

FRANCIS STUART
Faillandia
 252pp. Dublin: Raven Arts Press. Paperback, £5.95.
 085186 0061

The fact that it was as a national of neutral Ireland that Francis Stuart elected to spend the years of the Second World War in Germany late self-abandonment. But at the last accounts for some of the living down he has been required to do. Long after Pound had been released from St Elizabeth's, whether his calm coda, as seen becoming modernist, is seen as a small business man in a world he will not comprehend. Lumky dies in the wilderness, D.C. simple, succinct, often quite like *Milton Lumky Territory* takes on a microcosm, washes it clean and sets it on a path between self-justification and the muted is perhaps too respectable to frighten or minimize anyone. In writing the book, Dick's protagonist – seemed to be trying to date to a decent life. Skip was perhaps down. It is our gain that the author of *The High Castle* had no such luck.

I realise that the dreaming of a handful of poets and novelists is not going to bring down a whole complex edifice. But passion, particularly imaginative passion, is a slow, underground, eroding process, and it spreads from mind to mind and heart to heart, until one day... unforeseen events are suddenly inevitable.

Faillandia is consistent with this analysis to the extent that it promotes sexual and religious as well as imaginative (albeit rather tired and etiolated) passion. Its dominant tone is, however, a long way from the essay's (transformational) breeziness; the victories that passion and intuition win are small where they are not Pyrrhic.

Although the blurb designates *Faillandia* as "Kafkaesque", Stuart's cursory allegorizing of his "beloved and hated land" excuses him the detailed analysis required of the political novel proper. Gideon's political nous is strictly impaired – he is more inclined to quote Dostoevsky and Reich than Lenin, Castro or Guvarra. The trouble begins when the government announces its plan to make adultery illegal – almost the only legislative act guaranteed to irk him to anything approximating action. The political situation deteriorates, there is a good

deal of sketchy and apparently well-mannered street fighting, followed by the arrival of the mysterious and hopelessly melodramatic Colonel Klotz and the threat of super-power intervention. The failure to make any of this real and immediate betrays Stuart's essential lack of interest in matters political. When comparing the ideas of the opposing factions, Gideon concludes that "one was roughly the shape, and the feel and, if touched by an organ of sense, say the tongue, would have much the same old, tepid and somewhat stale taste as another".

The only response available to him is to start an anti-establishment magazine which is soon driven underground – the eponymous *Faillandia*. For all that it is not aimed at "those who were considered informed on matters of politics, culture and economics", for all that its editor bristles at the cultural presuppositions of rival publications as much as at the state of the nation, this haruspical little magazine becomes a best-seller and a focus for disaffection. The first issue carries an account of the demise of institutional religion, space fiction, a racing column and comments on the redundancy of parliamentary democracy – thus suggesting an editorial policy calculated to tax the intellectual curiosity of the average *Faillander*, who nevertheless seems to derive comfort and a way forward from it.

As in all Stuart's novels, sexuality is a conspicuous preoccupation; Gideon takes every opportunity for sexual fantasy and his wife Kathy is moved to make a modest contribution to the debate over a hurried coupling behind a display case in the Geological Museum – "what an astounding thing sex is". In spite of her description of orgasm as "a revolution inside me", sexuality is not provocative, subversive, anti-authoritarian or a way of expressing discontent. Stuart elaborates an essentially private, genital metaphysics which euphemizes libidinal activities as the "best's... beguiling", conceals erections with guff about the "fallen angel" and "uprisen beast" and promotes the uncomplicatedly redemptive possibilities of sex: "the whole hostile world was having its foundation washed away in the tidal wave of orgasm".

Faillandia is discomfiting because it proceeds in an evasive and sideways fashion. The political situation deteriorates, there is a good

ends up, with equanimity, on a couch with his own street-wise son, Fred. It is a horribly well-paced little saga. The narrator of "QB/354/294 & 6" reports as objectively as possible on his re-creation of a "behavioural experiment" based on the "races of the dead", organized by Kurt Franz, that feature in Jean-François Steiner's *Treblinka*.

Burt's style is remote and distinctive. In several stories, his dialogue heightens the artifice of conversation by pruning away the expected punctuation, distancing the reader from the reassurances of normal speech. On occasion this draws attention to itself by approaching the condition of the split infinitive writ large ("It looks, she says as she sits down, delicious"), and in other places seems robotic ("My grandmother, I think, he says, you would like"); it is coupled with a narrative technique that feeds off involvement with the action by means of intrusive stage-directions.

There are places where this is highly effective, and nowhere more so than in the stories about childhood. "Hiding" concerns two adolescent cousins who have grown apart and are discovering the tawdry secrets of sexuality in different ways; and "I Just Kept On Shilling" offers a strange psychological snapshot of a disturbed boy in a Catholic boarding school who learns that deception is a short-cut to maturity. The experience of childhood emerging into sophistication is one of Burt's unerring specialities.

The one story that attempts something on a larger scale is not a success – "Follow Passengers" runs to more than thirty pages, and suffers from the self-consciousness of an experiment. *Floral Street* is almost unusual debut, and because his characters tend to be rather unpleasant personalities. In "Floral Street" we follow a fashion-conscious schoolteacher nicknamed "Bear" from the bed of his lover Jane to a clandestine photographic session, where he

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Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

ED McBAIN
Eight Black Horses
 250pp. Hamish Hamilton, £8.95.
 0241 11666 X

The good news is that this isn't another of Ed McBain's glossy Florida fey stories: we're back with Steve Carella, Cotton Hawes, Bert Kling and the other guys at the 87th Precinct. The bad news is that it's a story about the Deaf Man, that boring master criminal who, secure in his intellectual superiority, sends the dim-witted cops clues about his intentions, only to be foiled by coincidence, chance, or the whim of fate. This time, since it's nearly Christmas, they're puzzling over pictures of two nightsticks, three pairs of handcuffs, four police hats, five walkie-talkies... and so on up to twelve roast pigs. And still don't get it. As always with McBain, the novel is superbly professional, with some good jokes (and surprisingly, some mild pornography). But one still wishes he'd turn off the Deaf Man's hearing aid and go back to the mordantly funny police procedural of some years back.

J. K. MAYO
The Hunting Season
 253pp. Collins Harvill, £9.95.
 000 2227835

Witnessing a murder on a cross-Channel ferry draws dramatist Anthony Mayo into some mysterious, international, conspiracy. To escape he flies to Canada, where he has been offered the job of turning *Black House* into an all-day marathon stage production. But no sooner has he fed the first sheep of paper into his portable, than the intrigue catches up with him, and he's soon trading bullets with villains

Stuart's insistence on the passive receptivity of the writer encourages equivocations of all kinds. Gideon's refusal to commit himself to opinions or sides looks disconcertingly like simple political illiteracy. He is consistently embarrassed and self-deprecatory, mistrustful of all initiatives, pathologically unassertive; his chronic retreats from enthusiasm flirt outrageously with bathos: "While I was reading R. D. Lang I was full of new ideas, but afterwards I couldn't recall a single one of them" or "There were times for caution and times for daring. Not being sure which of these this was, Gideon said: 'Ycs and No.'" An irremediable amateur, he is suspicious of the professionalism of the politician, literary critic and "gangster revolutionary". Guided by unspecified "psychic and numinous" criterion, he is the kind of revolutionary more frequently to be found on a *chaise longue* or a psychiatrist's couch.

It may be that a belated rehabilitation of Francis Stuart has begun: although *Faillandia* has as yet no British publisher, *Black List, Section H* has been published by Penguin and he has been allowed his say on Channel Four. Although not represented particularly well by this new book, he is an important writer who is also one of the last remaining links with the Irish literary renaissance: Yeats praised him long before vilifying him as a Nazi; he was the son-in-law of Maude Gonne, an habituée of George Russell (A. E.) at home. His choice of a foreign country in preference to his own does not of itself invalidate his work; but his neglect by the literary establishment has been damaging. Stuart has been so far outside the mainstream for so long that it would be surprising if his writing were not idiosyncratic to a degree. If his ducking and weaving did not seem somewhat beside the point. It is difficult to imagine the terms in which one might debate the proposition that ideas like "the dictatorship of the proletariat" have failed to penetrate the human psyche because "they can't be transferred into a dream". Stuart's detachment from events is sufficiently extreme to encourage him to draw historical parallels which, leaving aside questions of their precision, are of little conceivable use: "Substitute the Torah for the New Testament and the State of Israel in the early years after its foundation was very close to Dostoevsky's Holy Russia."

In the snows of northern Ontario. Elegantly written – J. K. Mayo is the pseudonym of a "distinguished novelist" – and put together, but the plot remains resolutely mysterious, and the hero's instant transfiguration into gun-toting heavy from peace-loving playwright is not altogether credible.

H. R. F. KEATING
Mrs Craggs: Crimes cleaned up
 220pp. Bantam and Enright, £8.95.
 0907675 484

Mrs Craggs, charlady-detective, cleans up no fewer than eighteen crimes in this collection of short stories, narrated, for the most part, by her friend and colleague, Mrs Milborne, a more sensitive plant than the fearless Craggs, who has no hesitation in telling Scotland Yard superintendents that they're making fools of themselves. With her mop and duster she moves in exalted circles, uncovering a corpse in the House of Lords, concealing the evidence of a corgi's misadventure in the gardens of a large house in central London, and sorting out a problem concerning the obituary column of *The Times*. Plot occasionally a little thin, but narration and characterization light and amusing.

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Missing the meaning

Dick Davis

HARTON LEVI ST ARMAND
Emily Dickinson and Her Culture: The soul's society
368pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 26267 4
CHRISTOPHER E. G. BENFEY
Emily Dickinson and the Problem of Others
131pp. University of Massachusetts Press;
distributed in the UK by Transatlantic Book
Service. \$15.
087021 437 4
VIVIAN R. POLLAK
Dickinson: The anxiety of gender
258pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
\$21.45.
08014 1605 1
JANE DONAHUE EBERWEIN
Dickinson: Strategies of limitation
308pp. University of Massachusetts Press;
distributed in the UK by Transatlantic Book
Service. \$25.
087023 473 0

Emily Dickinson's poetry is so immediately recognizable that it seems wholly idiosyncratic: the punctuation by dashes, the hymnal metres, the cryptic mixture of sentimentality and inexplicable foreboding, the grammatical ellipses and quirky vocabulary together make her work apparently unique, without antecedents or believable successors. Barton Levi St Armand's *Emily Dickinson and Her Culture* is a welcome corrective to this first impression, defining her poems as "part of a recognizable genre" and "of her age as well as beyond it". The genre is that which Emerson described as "Verses of the Portfolio" – poetry written, usually by women, for scrap-books and circulation within a small family circle, in simple forms and confining itself to domestic and local subjects (which were perceived as being particularly feminine). Like many truths that have gone largely unnoticed this seems startlingly obvious once it has been pointed out and, as St Armand indicates, the description was first applied to Emily Dickinson's work by the one literary editor to whom she dared submit a few poems, Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

St Armand's evidence for Higginson's claim is unexceptionable, but most of his book is concerned not so much with the formal convention which Dickinson was writing, as with the effect on her work of the artistic culture of her time. Her letters reveal a keen

interest in the literature published when she was a young woman, and though she was enthusiastic about familiar names like George Eliot and Mrs Browning she was equally excited about popular authors who have long been forgotten. St Armand has read these authors and his findings are illuminating: Lydin Sigourney, Elizabeth Phelps and Harriet Prescott Spofford wrote on death and the after-life, on domestic tribulation and sundered lovers, on feelings of religious exaltation in romantic landscapes, in ways which do often sound very like much of Dickinson's verse. St Armand has even found a likely source for Dickinson's metaphor (in "Further in Summer than the Birds") of an evening landscape as a cathedral with crickets as its hidden choristers. In 1859 Oliver Wendell Holmes published *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, whose heroine is a young girl given to writing portfolio verses, one of which runs in part

When, turning round their dial-track,
Eastward the lengthening shadows pass,
Her little mourners, clad in black
The crickets, sliding through the grass,
Shall pipe for her an evening mass

and Emily Dickinson in using the same notion even uses the same rhyme ("grass / mass"). St Armand is good on Elizabeth Phelps's "Biedermeier Paradise", an apt phrase for the pretty whimsy that clogs many of Dickinson's poems, and he is particularly interesting when he draws parallels between the kinds of romantic and religious landscape painting fashionable in mid-nineteenth-century New England (and assiduously collected by Austin Dickinson) and the vague feelings of religious awe associated with sunsets and distant vistas in Austin's sister's poetry.

But despite St Armand's persuasiveness in locating the sources of Emily Dickinson's imaginative world in the culture about her, it becomes more and more evident as we read his parallel examples that Dickinson's poetry is interesting in almost exactly inverse proportion to the extent to which it resembles the popular models he has found. If she had stayed at the level of Lydia Sigourney there would be little reason for reading her now, and the book paradoxically leaves us with an even stronger sense of her specialness. It is moreover a difficult book to read with pleasure; it is very repetitious and the sentimental writing St Armand has investigated seems to have had a dire influence on his own rather coy prose. Nevertheless it is a real contribution to our understanding of Emily Dickinson's cultural

milieu and the ways in which this decisively influenced her writing.

If St Armand can seem too eager to reduce his subject to the elements she owed to her environment, Christopher E. G. Benfey in his study of the theme of privacy in her poems treats her at times almost ahistorically, quoting Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin, comparing her



to twentieth-century poets like Louise Glück and Frank Bidart, and spending an inordinate amount of space, in such a short book, on modern legal definitions of privacy; all this seems beside the point. He is best when discussing specific poems, though he sometimes worries a text unconsciously for meanings to suit his analysis; he remarks in passing: "It has been my aim to complicate Dickinson's statement" – which seems a perverse ambition and one in which he has certainly succeeded. His book examines whether the privacy of her poetry "is elected or inevitable" and "whether she makes room for ways in which privacy can be transcended or violated or shared", and he concludes that despairing of knowledge of others she looked for "nearness", an intimacy not based on cognition. Benfey is an adroit advocate for his point of view, but the book reads as an elegant essay around a problem that uses Dickinson as an example, rather than as an aid towards the understanding of her work. We are left with a much stronger impression of Benfey's mind than of Dickinson's. Vivian R. Pollak's and Jane Donahue Eberwein's books are thematic analyses of Dickinson's poetry, using it as evidence of her mental preoccupations. As her poems constantly imply a hidden plot, this sort of guessing-game is very tempting, but any conclusions drawn from such evidence must of their nature be unverifiable, and are often, little more than prudent gossip. Neither of these books is negligible, but Eberwein's is the better, mainly because she is more willing to trust her author, and less beguiled by psycho-babble.

Pollak berates soother critic for not being

Basle

to A. P.

Behind me the garden descends to water.
Each night the balloon drifts over the river,
gas jets stain the silence
and trout rise into the shadows.

I watch the children through curtains
and weariness; this is the other weather;
a new carpet is laid, and the dogs run towards me
over gravel paths. No matter who it is

death is all these things and a release.
You know in all those years I only ever
changed trains there, once, in the middle
of the night. Feet that keep on disappearing
as we walk towards the corner.

You stand beside the table.
As I put back the books I get that
faint childhood smell of snow and urine.

IAN POPE

psychologically sophisticated and determination not to fall this test can make an irritating reading. Her treatment of the on death, immortality and Dickinson's distinctive sense of metaphysical being is skimpy and makeshift, and she is more interested in the poems on social relationships and on love. In these latter she ceives a plot which she assumes to have happened – that the poet felt she had promised love and that it was then lost in a single lumpy meeting when the affair may not have been physically consummated. The social and erotic are seen as areas of frustration for Dickinson, and it is out of this experience of having desires that were not fulfilled that her poetry was written. In this sense, including her relationships, language, is the central fact of Emily Dickinson's life. This sounds plausible, but then there could be said of virtually every nineteenth-century lyric poet.

In general Pollak believes Dickinson's the poet says she is talking about human love, and assumes that she is really talking about them when she says she is talking about God and death. Eberwein almost reverses the formula; she points out that a great many Dickinson's poems are clearly personal ("written by" a man, an earl, a child, a bride, a corpse etc) and suggests that the love poems fall into this category; she cogently puts it "no-one has yet attempted to demonstrate that Dickinson... herself for love like the valiant speaker of 'prove it now' (poem 357)". The poem's death, immortality and the quest for physical meaning she places at the center of her work; as the poet herself said, "my circumstance" – a remark that Eberwein suitably interprets as the probing of the human awareness of divine purpose. It is a link this attentiveness for meaning, everywhere apparent in Dickinson's poetry, to "the Puritan analogizing which interpreted all incidents as evidence of Jehovah's will. A recollection quoted by Armand gives a striking picture of her apparently waiting for the disclosure of meaning in this way: "She had a habit of rapt attention as if she were listening to something very faint and far off. We children saw her at sunset, standing at the kitchen window, peering through a vista in the trees to the western sky...". The crucially important moments of Dickinson's poems occur when she feels not merely that she cannot read the meaning, but that there is none; as she wrote in a letter, "Tis a dangerous moment for me when the meaning goes out of things and I stand straight – and punctual – and yet signal comes." Eberwein may be less accurate than Pollak, but in locating the "tenuous destitution" of Dickinson's poems in such moments, rather than in her erotic quest over a suitor who may or may not have existed, she provides a much more convincing picture of the poet.

Although it is not the practice of the TLS to publish obituaries, we have chosen to commemorate Geoffrey Grigson, Robert Graves and Philip Larkin with personal tributes from younger poets who knew them or were influenced by them. The first two are printed here; in a forthcoming issue we will print a poem about Larkin by Andrew Motion.

Geoffrey Grigson, 1905–1985

Peter Reading

Geoffrey Grigson was a national monument when I was an art student over twenty years ago. Three early issues of *New Verse*, which I'd bought on a youthful bibliophilic spree, contained contributions not only by the legendary but also by one Ewart, who was at that time (the saucy Sixties) re-emergent.

I thought of Grigson then as an editor, critic, English amateur natural historian – I didn't know much of his poetry. I read him on Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore and a painter I'd hitherto regarded as a clumsy eccentric – Samuel Palmer (whose pictures have seemed magical to me ever since). I was first and permanently attracted to the poems of William Barnes by Grigson's enthusiastic commentary on them. His topographical and historical guides had the same quality of pointing out something good one had somehow missed. His accounts of flora and fauna were knowledgeable and not poetically twee. His reviews amused me greatly; exposing humbuggery, spotting talent, valuing sense, zapping bunkum. They were healthy, good fun to read (though the dissected probably didn't relish them), and the attendant whines of "cruelty" from the anti-vivisection lot were entertaining. In this desultory way many of us have learned from Grigson.

The verse has the same diversity of interests, enthusiasms, ferocities. There are mortal broodings and celebrations. The value of good things is Grigson's continual theme. He is insistent that certain things or people are excellent, and those, therefore, that aren't, provoke his satiric flourishes. "Another verse-reviewing quip" is neatly dispatched in one squib as a

sacrifice to precisely the same cause as that which engenders the celebratory, haiku-esque:

An item of best being is
Halving this pear and in its
Ivory seeing this black
Star of Seeds.

"Items of best being" are what he was good at guiding us towards. It is his gratitude for these which lends tension to his elegiac strengths:

You are young, you two, in loving:
Why should you wonder what endearments
Old whisper still to old in bed,
Or what the one left will say and say,
Aloud, when nobody overhears, to the one
Who irremediably is dead?

The poems got better and their author more prolific towards the end of his life (a new collection, *Persephone's Flowers*, will be published in June 1986). At their most impressive they have a Hopkins-like concision and cohesion brought about by an individual, subtle internal homophony.

The poet's notebooks, *The Private Art* (1982), are unassumingly wise and useful. In these, as in all his writing, he finds things for us that we didn't know – a botanical observation, a painter's quality, an anonymous gravestone poem, a new insight to Quasimodo's "And suddenly it's evening".... There's an implicit generosity in a writer's sharing these items of best being – which quality also served to make Grigson the superlative anthologist he was.

Geoffrey Grigson was rare – a writer who, by affecting what one saw and thought, affected one's life. What he wrote of dead Auden is applicable to himself:

You are not. But time, after you, by you
Is different by your defiance.

Robert Graves, 1895–1985

Fleur Adcock

Someone told me, when I was in my twenties, that I had been influenced by Robert Graves. Slightly surprised, I turned to his *Collected Poems* (1959). Never mind about the content – I had other sources for my classical references, fairy-tale props and obsession with love – but here were bits of what I had thought to be my own diction glaring at me, together with familiar constructions, mannerisms, and even rhythms. I hastily composed a deliberately Gravesian poem about the Muse, dedicated it to my newly identified master, and hoped I had exorcised him. I was wary of stylistic influences, nervously picking over my verses for signs of Eliot, Yeats and other heavies, but it had not occurred to me that Graves had a style: I thought what he wrote was just poetry – a pure substance like distilled water, safely non-addictive.

This is a view he might have endorsed. He was full of idiosyncrasies, and some of his most memorable poems are the odder ones ("Warning to Children", "Welsh Incident"), but their oddness lies in their conceptions, not in their language, which is clear, precise, classical (even when using colloquial speech), and unaffected by what he called "the whore of contemporary fashion". The single-minded dedication to poetry which led him to live abroad, away from literary society, and to admit his living only by writing, is reflected in the untiring scrupulousness with which he revised each poem. He was almost over-careless, and always, until late in life, self-critical. In his seventies he published too many poems and their content became, (by deliberate policy) repetitive, but until then he pruned each successive *Collected Poems* down to something like the size of its predecessor.

A happy side-effect of his vow to be "no-body's servant" is the bulk and variety of his prose writings. Everyone knows about *I, Claudius*, but there were nearly twenty other

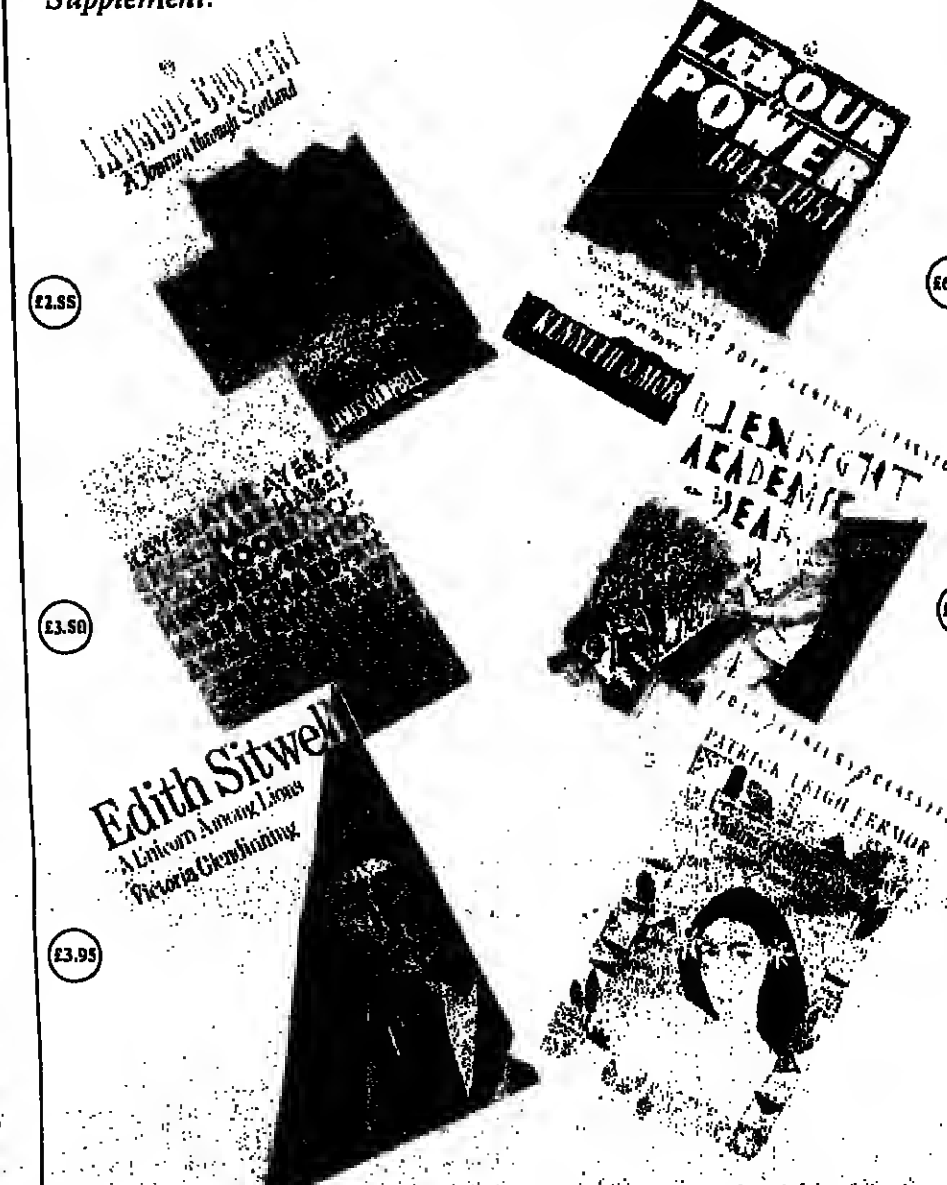
novels, as well as criticism (some of it wonderfully or, when it punctures a cherished favourite, alarmingly subversive), history, mythology and autobiography. All this is admirable; but what most people find hard to take is, of course, *The White Goddess*, that obsessed interweaving of Greek, Hebrew and Celtic mythology with occult alphabet lore and much else into a ruling philosophy. The true poet, Graves insisted, must be literally in love with the White Goddess (the Lunar Muse), to a succession of her human incarnations: "the main theme of poetry is, properly, the relations of man and woman". The poems he himself wrote on this theme include some of the most haunting and durable love-lyrics of this century – for example, "Sick Love" and "The Sea Horse" – but a thesis which excludes everyone but heterosexual males from the status of poet simply will not do.

By 1970, when I heard Graves read his poetry at the Marmalade Theatre in London, my early admiration had given way to an amused although fond irritation at his persistence in his folly ("I would always rather be a Court Fool than a Laureate", he once said), but like the rest of the audience I was charmed by his self-the almost arrogantly casual reading of the poems, the joky anecdotes, the somewhat woolly but still radiant air of authority. Two years later, in Mallorca, I seized greedily at an invitation from friends who had literary business with him to accompany them to Deyá. It was tricky to organize – Graves had no telephone, he had been ill, time was short – but it happened. We walked up through the garden and there coming to greet us, wearing that famous black hat, was Graves. He discoursed with predictably bizarre erudition on curious artefacts to his study, he made us join him in a ritual curse on a publisher, and when he gazed into my eyes and flattered me I felt for one hypnotized moment that to be a "Muse" might not be entirely unrewarding. His own Muse had led him into a poetic marsh in the end; but great poets, in old age, ought to be eccentric, and Graves was close to being a great poet.

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Remainders

Eric Korn

t understand, of course, that Christmas cards that play a tune when you open them (usually "Silent Night", a sardonic jest) are already tired trouse, or old hat, or warmed-over kedge, or whatever the expression is; and likewise cards that light up are as old as Christmas Past (there was surely some ingenious Victorian device that scraped a piece of flint against phosphorus-imregnated parchment, bringing about frightful industrial ailments among the card-gummers of Bavaria, and various catastrophes in English nurseries - "Disobedient Child Inclined", "Sash Only Clue"); nevertheless, 1985 was probably the first year in which you could buy, if so minded, cards that lit up and played a tune.

They aren't very state-of-the-art as yet; or rather the state of the art of which they are part is not yet very artful, since all they can do is represent Christmas trees with flashing lights in their branches, or, by a bold leap of the fancy, birthday cakes with flashing candles, in which case the melody you hear is "Happy Birthday", readily distinguishable from "Silent Night". But soon, such is the power of an idea whose time has come, the very same circuitry will no doubt be used to depict pounding hearts for St Valentine, glistening tears for Mother's Day, the twinkle of departing wing-tips for Bon Voyage, the coruscation of Roman Candles for Guy Fawkes Day cards. (You don't send Guy Fawkes Day cards? You will. CUPIDITAS, the Campaign for Universal and Profitable Incrementing of Demand in Toiletries And Stationery, is coming your way.)

There's nothing new about the multiple-function card either (Turn those tired old funeral baked meats into tasty bridal vol-au-vents). I have an exceptionally unflinching child's squeaker-book from Taiwan, three leaves of snorts, beeps and woofles, accompanied by a peculiarly pawky text: "Just press the picture and our Friend the lamb 'BEE', the cat 'MEOWS', and the little birdie goes 'TWEET. TWEET.' What an amusing book this is!" For some reason the book sold poorly; it was reissued (after a brainstorming session in some smoky creative-ideas boardroom in World Child-Book House, Taipei) for a more forward-looking, industrial-oriented, technoprene generation, with the same internal mechanism, but with glittering pictures of jet-planes, hovercraft and monorails, going "BEE", "MEOWS", or "TWEET. TWEET". It is mushrooming inexorably, is the suprabook, the Computer-Enhanced-Print-Environment, and these pioneering examples will seem in the perspective of time as epochal

as the work of F.S. Clifford, even though now they may seem mere swaddlings, creatures from the electronic cradle, though . . . I'm sorry, what is it?

Clifford, F.S. Clifford of School Street, Boston, creator of *Romance of Perfume Lands*, or *the Search for Captain Jacob Hole*. Haven't you? What rotten luck. I've got my copy here beside me, the first genuine sponsored fiction, the first fully advertising-resource-exploiting piece of literature in the world. While the odd discreet commercial break was nothing new, Clifford was the first to pen a full-length essay on the superiority of his own business, and then embed it in acres of prosaic advertising.

Clifford was not just an author but also a druggist, unguentier, scent-chandler and spice-person. The tale (he seems to have written it himself) concerns a Bostonian perfume-monger who takes ship with a school chum who is looking for a long-lost father, a merry acrobatic Irish stowaway, and various other interested parties, for an adventurous voyage around the world and back to Boston, finding time along the way for various olfactory adventures, a cochineal plantation, an *enflourage* at Grasse, a grove of Tonka or Coumarouna beans, hot to mention a hostage-taking situation in New Zealand when the Maori brigand Uamoaik Aik hijacks the party, who escape thanks to a device involving incandescent platinum which causes the savages to sink in terror to their knees. The same device involves them in further adventures off the coast of Africa, when the ship's crew and passengers sleep from Mombasa to Aden in consequence of one of the chums having experimentally filled the Magic Perfumer with opium. ("We told him not to mention it and that we were all liable to mistakes.")

For most of the novel the text alternates regularly with full-page advertisements for the Organita (will play any tune that was ever written in a melodious fashion), the Stereopticon Exhibition, the Celebrated Morris Chair, Ladies' Angular Penmanship, Radical Writings in German, Cancer Cured without the Knife; though when the adventure and the SS Cynthia are well out to sea, the action is allowed to continue for several pages at a time, before being cut off in mid-humorous-English monologue: "I feel rather shaky in my timbers for my 'unger was' his CORNS CORNS CORNS Why Use Strong Mineral Acid?" Shortly thereafter the long-lost Captain is found, midst mangosteens and durian, Savage Queens and "Hub" drawers ("indispensable to larger men who appreciate comfort"), a civet kitten is acquired for the travellers to pet and admire the content of its anal sacs, the lost are reunited, Peruvian Balsam is studied, Hal-

ford's Celebrated Leicestershire Snice is commended ("adulteration is one of the evils of these high-pressure times"), the deserving are enriched by the discovery of an ambergris mine (reflecting the author's touching belief that ambergris is the dung of constipated whales), and all and sundry sail for home, not forgetting the virtues of Byrne's Life-Inventor ("a self-cure for debility no matter from what cause it arises, warranted in all cases") and, in all other cases, Bryan's Electrovoltaic Belt ("Mnde a New Men of Me" - Wm Gilchrist, Union, NY).

Sadly, my 1875 edition of *Perfume Lands* is not all it might be. As I turn each page, oech magic casement into fairy lands, it cracks from side to side like the Lady of Shalott's mirror (or at times from top to bottom). The Curse has undoubtedly come upon it, and it is a curse which is increasingly affecting the kind of books printed on acidified wood-pulp after 1854. Librarians are vying with each other to make the most apocalyptic forecast: "30 per cent of my books are already chemically dead," says one; "there will be no nineteenth-century popular fiction left by 2015" says another. Desperate remedies are proposed. The normal use of books must cease. Their terminally sick pages may only turn for the embalmer's eye of the microfiche camera. No unauthorized contact with books is to be permitted. Book purchases must cease until the gigantic work of copying has been paid for: meanwhile all available resources are to be directed to the search for a cure, a search probably vain since the fatal changes have already taken place. The parallels are inescapable; we are dealing with an outbreak of bibliographic AIDS, with a penumbra of AIDS-panic. I suggested this to a colleague the other day, and he was scandalized by my frivolity; then made a remark that illustrated my point. The Americans seem to be much more worried about this than us; they would be, of course, because their cheap books are more likely to catch it. "Lack of fibre, don't you know."

Mr Chatto had two sons, and there is no law of entail in the publishing trade: thus it came about that Pickering-begat, on the one hand, Chatto and Windus, who published books, and on the other Pickering and Chatto, who sold books that others published, and so the house of Pickering, one of the great names in the nineteenth-century book-trade (they actually invented the cloth-bound and later the cloth-bound book, which is to say they invented

modern publishing) ceased to be.

So Sir William Rees-Mogg was undoubtedly delighted to announce the resurrection of the Pickering imprint, the banner under which will march the ranks of the Pickering sets of the complete works of various famous sages whose complete works are more or less unavailable at the moment. The first set (arriving in sections of eight or ten over the next eighteen months), comprises Darwin and Babbage. The second set already assembling in base camps or their troopships, will contain Newton, Hume, and Mary Wollstonecraft leading Ladies' Auxiliary. Behind them dimly one discerns whole armies of the wise.

The books are to be edited by specialists; considerable thought has gone into the choice of the most appropriate editions to reprint; by the last revised; there will be full notes, introductions and indexes appropriate, durable binding, clean type on plague-proof paper. They will cost £40 per volume, less to subscribers. There is nonsense about limited and numbered editions: the intention is to furnish a standard edition which will be instantly available to new university in Venezuela or Tuvalu, or old one with a new grant. Librarians can be equipped without recourse to the rapine trade. (I can see, dimly, reluctantly, that it might be some people who would think that good idea.)

Are they needed? To be sure. The publishing industry, industrious though it is, has miserably failed to provide texts of more than a handful of Darwin's books. If you want to know what Darwin said about his theory or what he wrote about barnacles (the essential reference to cripitopods, apart from any historical importance) you are forced to search shelves, or wait while someone searches for you; some of my customers have been waiting patiently for years. Many titles have been in print for a century: various prints have appeared and since vanished. The twenty-nine volumes of Darwin will cost £1,130 (pre-publication): it would be a interesting challenge for a bookseller to see how far he could get in assembling original editions of the texts for that price. Some of the botanical titles would be easy; you could just settle for a reprint of the first edition of *Species*; *The Zoology of the Beagle* (the bird plates by Gould) would cost you many times more than the whole set. By no means the least interesting result of this useful enterprise will be that Malthusians and Darwinists and Babbage-men will have to face their sciences and decide whether they are students of the word or hoarders of the book.

There seems then to have been a rash of "Shall I . . . ?" lyrics printed in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and Beal's observation that the earliest datable poems in MS Rawl poet 160 belong to the 1600s encourages us to place "Shall I die?" as a product of this fashion. The presence of the poem in this group would raise several questions of literary interest. Does it stand in any specific relation to the Dowland song of 1600? Would knowledge of it as a member of a group of songs affect the way we respond to its structure or language? And if Shakespeare's name continues to be associated with the poem (as the Oxford editors threaten it will) what areas of Shakespearean interest are served by the ascription? Opposing Gary Taylor, Robbins and I. A. Shapiro (Letters, December 27) argue that the conventional nature of the poem's material disqualifies any positive identification. If one is only looking for authorial identity it may; but semantic identity is derived from a less dubious notion of textual individuality, one that can be approached by a process of successive approximation. Several of the "Shall I . . . ?" poems use internal rhyme; several conclude with the pun on dying; most position their "Shall I . . . ?" questions in the first stanza, and most of those position them at the beginning of the first and third lines. Out of this, the Dowland song and "Shall I die?" draw even more closely together: because both of them repeat their questions within the line, and both of them underline this repetition with internal sound effects. And of course the very question with which the Dowland begins appears at the beginning of the third line of "Shall I die?" (treating the poem as composed of eight-line stanzas).

The poems where identity in "figures of thought" as well as figures of speech. The interrogative mode common to all these poems embraces a concern with answers as well as questions. In this area too the Dowland song and "Shall I die?" are drawn together by similarities and, ultimately, by a significant difference. After the first stanza similar material continues to be ordered in a similar way. Both songs identify the lover's passion as desire or lust, and its fulfilment as a dream. In the Dowland

Letters

'Shall I Die?'

Sir, - Peter Beal's succinct account (Letters, January 3) of the manuscript context of "Shall I die?" is very welcome, as is his closing suggestion that the poem "reads . . . very much like a song lyric". There is in fact a group of early seventeenth-century songs which offers striking similarities with the text recently exhumed and which suggests that "Shall I die?" belongs to a much more specific class of poems than the "Petrarchan conventions" to which Gary Taylor and Robin Robbins refer (December 20).

"Shall I die?"'s closest links seem to be with the text of Dowland's "Shall I sue? shall I seek for grace?" (no 19 of *The Second Book of Songs and Ayres*, 1600, the poet of which is, as far as we know, unknown):

Shall I sue? shall I seek for grace?
Shall I pray? shall I prove?
Shall I strive to a heavenly joy
With an earthly love?
Shall I think that a bleeding heart
Or a wounded eye
Or a sigh can ascend the clouds
To attain so high?

This song seems to be at the head of a whole set of "Shall I . . . ?" lyrics. These include "Shall I come if I swim?" (Philip Rosseter, *A Book of Ayres*, 1601); "Shall I look to ease my grief?" set by Robert Jones, *Ultimatum Vale* (1605); Ferrabosco (1609) and Lichfield (1613); Dowland's own later "Shall I live with words to move?" (*A Pilgrim's Solace*, 1612); "Shall I be with joys deceived?" (William Corkine, *Ayres*, 1612); Campion's "Shall I come, sweet love, to thee?" and "Shall I then hope when faith is fled?" (*The Third Book of Ayres*, 1618); and John Attey's "Shall I tell you whom I love?" (*The First Book of Ayres*, 1622). Many of the other song-texts reprinted in Fellowes' and Doughtie's collections also rely on a "Shall I . . . ?" refrain. The opening lines of another song in Jones's *Ultimatum Vale* give the flavour of this little genre as well as any:

What if I sped where I least expected? What shall I say? Shall I lie?
What if I missed where I most affected? What shall I do? Shall I die?

There seems then to have been a rash of "Shall I . . . ?" lyrics printed in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, and Beal's observation that the earliest datable poems in MS Rawl poet 160 belong to the 1600s encourages us to place "Shall I die?" as a product of this fashion.

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ERICA SHEEN,
Wolfson College, Oxford.
JEREMY MAULE,
Trinity College, Oxford.

The thirteenth Annual Conference of the United Kingdom Association for Legal and Social Philosophy will be held at the University of Leeds on April 4-6, 1986, on the theme "Ethics and legal aspects of medicine". The Austin Lecture will be given by Professor David Raphael on "Life and death: ends and means". There will be symposia on "Male and female sterilization for eugenic and contraceptive purposes" (Elizabeth Kingdom and Alec Samuels); "Moral tolerance" (Jennifer Jackson and R. D. Mackay); "Warnock and after" (Tony Smith and John Coughlin); and "Resource and allocation" (R. G. Lee and John Harris). There will also be an Open Forum on Genetic Engineering. Further details can be obtained from Mark Ockelton, Faculty of Law, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

song the poet rejects the aspiration and embraces the "just disgrace" of failure. On the other hand, the "Shall I die?" poet develops the idea of the dream (and it is this curious five-stanza "dream-vision" episode which distorts the thematic and structural conventionalism of the whole) into a prophetic image of the success he then decides to pursue. There is thus an inverse relation between the two poems in terms of dramatic direction: one could characterize this as the fact that although both poems imply the negative answer to the questions from which they start, the question from which "Shall I die?" starts is the answer provided by the Dowland song: "Yet will not the pity my grief/ Therefore I must. / Silly heart thee yield to die / Perish in despair . . .". It is interesting to note that Dowland's own later "Shall I strive . . . ?" serves as a kind of dramatic postscript to "Shall I die?".

As all this should make clear, the relationship we suggest is of the "companion" kind. This would clearly have implications for their relative dating. The Dowland seems to be the stronger candidate for the primary position, for several reasons:

i) Theoretical economy: it would account for the whole phenomenon, not merely a single feature of it.

ii) The poem of the Dowland song does not require explanation. In fact its perfect pose within its conventions makes more sense when seen as derived from abstractions rather than from a single unsettled and unsettling text.

Actually (pace Gary Taylor), it would be quite easy to link this poem with seventeenth-century Shakespeare. Our "Shall I . . . ?" genre evokes a present-tense "moment" suspended by indecision and self-questioning about future action, and is itself an identifiable moment in the history of the Petrarchan convention - one that relates it clearly to the vogue for melancholia at the turn of the century. Shakespeare was not uninterested in such things. And in *Antony and Cleopatra* (one of the plays Taylor thinks of as self-evidently unsuitable for comparison) he continued his earlier unsettling of the moral and psychological implications of Petrarchism. From a more general point of view, a link with Dowland, fascinating in itself, might help us to consider issues like that of Shakespeare's musical literacy; and, for the purposes of the present debate, a timely comparison with another working artist of the period might help rescue him from the unnaturally literary isolation of contemporary methods of textual analysis.

For the debate so far has predictably shed more light on method than on Shakespeare. It has revealed the extent to which "objective" methods always have some covert ideological bias; ideas which start from a definition of authorship invariably short-circuit themselves. Such short-circuitings are commonplace within the Shakespeare industry, so neither the self-constituting assertions of Gary Taylor nor Professor Shapiro's concern with the history of Shakespeare scholarship should surprise unduly. Dr Robbins's negative challenge also disappoints. His curious disqualification - that Shakespeare can hardly be a serious contender for authorship since his only proven use of similar verse-techniques is given to a "judicious" character like Bottom - suggests that he subscribes to a notion of the relation between authorial status and point-of-view every bit as speedily inductive as Mr Taylor's argument. Both opponents seem inflexible about the poem's form, and dismissive of its context(s). Mr Beal, with admirable clarity, lays out the facts about its context within its manuscript. We have tried to show how other features of the poem's universe of discourse offer clues that obsessive concern with author-ity will necessarily neglect.

SHARON R. SMITH,
5172 Glenhaven Avenue, Riverside, California 92606.

purposes" (Elizabeth Kingdom and Alec Samuels); "Moral tolerance" (Jennifer Jackson and R. D. Mackay); "Warnock and after" (Tony Smith and John Coughlin); and "Resource and allocation" (R. G. Lee and John Harris). There will also be an Open Forum on Genetic Engineering. Further details can be obtained from Mark Ockelton, Faculty of Law, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

The Brothers Adam

Sir, - David N. King has written to you (January 10) to complain of Kerry Downes's sloppiness in not listing our mistakes, which he then proceeds to do for him. But whereas Professor Downes did find one genuine printer's error ("Adams" for "Adam": even if the brothers allowed a final "s" - that was before standard spelling, let that pass) Mr King's "mistakes" are of a different nature.

We are accused of "implying" (p 111) that Moor Park was an Adam house. That page deals entirely with a number of tapestry rooms; and Moor Park, which has one (with famous Adam furniture it it), is an Adam house for that purpose: much as Croome Court (over the page) is an Adam house as well, although the exterior was certainly not designed by any of the brothers.

Second, the fact that an Adam drawing for the facade of Ugbrooke exists does not mean that Capability Brown had nothing to do with the appearance of the house.

Third, to think that we are unaware of the destruction of the Deputy Ranger's lodge in Green Park in London because we describe it in the present tense shows that King is not familiar with the historic present, a common English construction. We reproduce only plans and an engraved perspective of the house. He himself admits that we record its destruction elsewhere in the book.

A letter like King's may look damaging to someone unfamiliar with the book or the material. But having dealt with the first three points we cannot go on wasting your time and ours, Sir, with such fooling stuff. Perhaps Mr King is to give us the "much needed" book on the brothers himself. We hope it will be searching, extensive and deal with many of the fascinating things which the scope of our brief study has forced us to omit. But let him beware of cavils - since there is nothing wearier than a mistaken pedant.

ANNE RYKWERT,
JOSEPH RYKWERT,
26a Wedderburn Road, London NW3.

Disease and Personal Responsibility

Sir, - I was dismayed, though not surprised, to see that Iain McIlchrist is a medical student. His review (December 13) of Jeffrey Meyers's *Disease and the Novel, 1880-1960* is a sad commentary on the level of consciousness prevalent in the medical profession today. McIlchrist's tone of irritability and defensiveness, as he repeatedly insists that illness is purely accidental and meaningless, expresses terror in face of the possibility that human beings might actually be held responsible for their own experience. Seldom are we conscious of creating disease; however, we are not fully conscious creatures. Our experiences of illness belong to us just as all that we experience belongs to us. Through discomfort and disfigurement our bodies communicate the need for change of some kind in terms of the thought and behaviour. McIlchrist will not be doing his patients any favours by encouraging the mind-body split that most of us have learned to experience. Simple-minded theories about "cancer personalities" frequently are cited and, probably rightly, dismissed, as a way of discrediting discussions of the psycho-soma interrelationship. We love to imagine ourselves as non-responsible victims of indifferent and senseless fate. In that way we avoid the very difficult task of becoming conscious, fully responsible human beings. Responsibility does not mean guilt. In fact, as any observant psychotherapist knows, guilt (i.e. self-attack) is a wonderful way of avoiding change.

SHARON R. SMITH,
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Number 55
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The giant periodical *Antaeus* is sustained by three cities: New York, London and Tangier. Tangier (where the original giant is supposed to be buried) is the home of its founding editor, Paul Bowles, the American expatriate novelist, composer and short-story writer. London is where its first issue was printed, in 1970; but now it provides little more than a mailing address; few British contributors are on view. New York is its real base and centre, where its editor, the poet and anthropologist Daniel Halpern (who helped to found it) also runs the American Poetry Series for the Ecco Press, which now publishes *Antaeus* in part as a kind of showcase for its impressive list. Ecco Press authors make up about a quarter of the contributors to each issue.

A typical issue of *Antaeus* weighs in at around 300 pages, is richly illustrated, and publishes short stories, essays, poems and - a nice appellation and a useful category - "documents". Recent contributions have included a memoir of Jean Stafford by her older sister, autobiographical pieces by Walter Alsh and Paul Bowles, and an interview with

Zbigniew Herbert, as well as such *trouvailles* as a set of love-letters by Marina Tsvetaeva and prose by Walt Whitman. Over the years, some of *Antaeus*'s most distinguished material has come from this "documents" section; the two "only childhoods" of Abish and Bowles are particularly interesting. Abish writes haltingly, at times dragging; only in perversity does he become fluent. "There is, I suppose, a certain satisfaction to be derived from the fact that my earliest memory is the memory of being bored," Bowles, writing in issue 55, seems to have escaped boredom early and often, by recourse to travel. His piece, in some ways an accelerated version of his autobiography, *Without Stopping*, is written in brisk and matter-of-fact sentences. "My life consists of the places where I have lived and the work I have accomplished in those places", he writes simply and enviously.

In general, the prose in *Antaeus* offers a first-rate selection of new American writing. Some of the short-story writers have been introduced to a British public by *Granta*; others have not: Richard Ford, Tobias Wolff, T. Coraghessan Boyle, Louise Erdrich, Allan Gurganus. They write raucously and sad provincial fictions, influenced by movies, by painting a story at the beginning, and ending it maybe two-thirds of the way through. "A light can go out in the heart", writes Ford. Particularly memorable are his triangle of mother and son and vet communist humpman in "Com-munism", Wolff's criminal and kind woman

usherette, Boyle's promiscuous Alaskan loner, Erdrich's casually fatal coupling, and Gurganus's runaway mother in the 1920s South. Stories like these establish a kind of geography of American pain, with humour and wildness mixed in, through the likes of Boyle's "oak-framed water-bed" and "a voice so deep it would have made Johnny Cash turn pale".

The poetry - apart from the translations, of Herbert, Seltzer, Rilke, Montale and others - travels less well. This is nothing to do with the editor, but with the present tolerances and prejudices of the language. It has been sold on both sides of the Atlantic that American and British English are different languages. To an American, much British poetry must look four-square and prosy; to me, much of the American poetry in *Antaeus* looks pretty and vaporous; permitting phrases like "vivid life", "gentle weirdnesses like "a mandolin" / by an opulence we can't endure", and amazingly wooden movements like those of Ira Sedon's "Zinfandel".

But the word alone warmed me, seemed pure joy, an exclamation of love in a foreign tongue. How unlikely the New England town where I now live, where maple leaves turning yellow and red pregnant with, persistent winters. I used to think of snow as keeping us warm, enclosed, watching from our windows.

Between the sunny steam and the straight wood, fortunately there are still "big" American poems that inhabit the same country as the

short stories, and that constitute some kind of event. Among them are poems by Stephen Dobyns, James Galvin and Gerald Stone.

The sumac was somehow reeking with sex, the branches were covered with tender velvet and the heavy fruit was thick with bright red halcyon. As I recall the twigs, when we broke them, had a creamy, we called it milk, or juice - and though the poem was innocent enough, and no more metaphorical than either the violet or the bitter daisy, our minds were already fulfilled.

Given the present strength and influence of British and American writing, there has seemed to me to be a crying need for a transatlantic periodical; *Antaeus* looks like it is equipped to fulfil such a function.

The whole of Volume VII, No. 1 of the literary magazine *Argo* is devoted to an excerpt from Jenny Joseph's long work, *Persephone*, in poetry and prose. It retells the story of the girl of Persephone by Hades and of the girl of Demeter, her mother; Jenny Joseph has set the story in modern times, much of it related in prose which is deliberately deadpan. *Argo*, usually, publishes a "clutch" of poems supported by reviews and fiction. A recent issue included translations of Italian poetry edited by Hilary Davies; *Argo* costs £4, from Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2AQ.

COMMENTARY

Roguish reminders

Peter Kemp

Colette
TFI/BBC2

There is more coquette than Colette in the French television film of her life, recently shown on BBC 2. It is not so much the author with the individual eye as the character in the public eye that attention is devoted to. Repeatedly, Colette is shown archly delighting or defying audiences. To cheer from bystanders, she's seen going up in a balloon. As she glides winsomely across the floor of a lesbian nightclub, bosomy dinner-jacketed dancers coo in appreciation. Her baring of a breast and kissing of her lover, Missy, on stage during the finale, "Réve d'Egypte", receive considerable prominence. The climax of her career, the film suggests, was her theatrical triumph as Lea in her dramatization of *Chéri*: swathed in a mauve peignoir and clutching a bouquet, she strolls entranced across the stage, showered with applause and blowing grateful kisses.

Scenes illustrating the literary side of Colette's life have a similar staginess. Celebrities—each with some identifying mark unmistakably pinned on to them—are grouped round her like a supporting cast. "Your soul seems full of sensuous delight and bitterness", Colette is assured by a white-carnationed Proust at a garden party before being whisked on—through a crowd exchanging remarks like "Zola is to come. Since 'J'accuse', he's become a social success"—to meet "Pierre Loti, author of *Ramoucho*". Later, as an irate individual strolls across a scene, onlookers helpfully annotate events with the information that he is "Erik Satie, a promising composer".

The workbooks *Who's Who* nature of these interludes typifies the stiffness brought to an outstandingly flexible life by TFI's film. Even in format, it creaks. Each of its two parts is introduced as an interview with the elderly Colette which sets off a sputtering sequence of retrospects. Clumsy flashbacks lurch and leapfrog through her life. Scenes tend to be brief and jerky. Transitions are rudimentary. Sometimes, gaps are crudely spanned by a caption ("Eight years later"). Often, it's hard to tell

how much time has elapsed between one scene and the next, a difficulty enhanced by the film's reluctance to owe its protagonists convincingly.

Most events in the narrative are plucked from *Sido* and *My Apprenticeships*, Colette's accounts of her early years in Burgundy and her introduction to marriage, Paris, and authorship. But, though the basic facts are brought in, the details which make her recollections of these phases of her life unforgettable are discarded. The story of her first marriage, for instance—as an immature girl mismatched with an over-ripe roud—here loses much of its sinister compulsion. The bony-shoudered vulnerability of Clémentine Amouroux as the young Colette co-habits shrinkingly with the bloated knowingness conveyed by Jean-Pierre Bissou as Willy. But physically, psychologically and emotionally, things are prettified. Willy never looks senior enough; a glossy head of hair is grafted on to his baldness which Colette's memoirs keep highlighting as a reminder of the age discrepancy. Titivation also nuzzles her naively provincial appearance on first arriving in Paris. The "great inconvenient rope of hair" that fell, like an unwieldy "serpent", in one thick plait to her feet is re-styled into smarter pigtails.

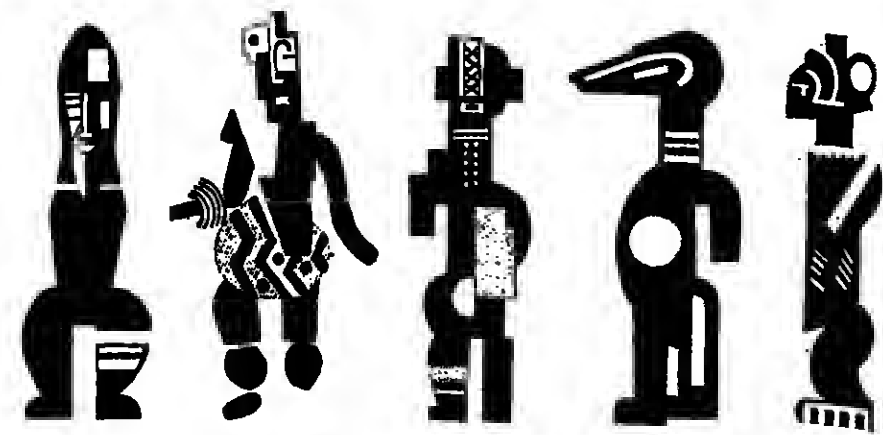
It isn't only coiffures that get combed out in this film's survey. Whole swathes of Colette's life are brushed aside. Neither of the world wars she lived through is even mentioned. Her graphic pictures of the Great War—scenes like her surreptitious visit to a Verdun where shrapnel falls like hail and the flickering cannonade fills the sky with a kind of aurore horreale—are ignored, as are her late reports on Paris under the Nazi Occupation and the interment by the Gestapo of her third husband, Maurice Goudekot. Bizarrely, in fact, Goudekot never figures in this biography at all—something that seems especially unfair in view of the fact that, of Colette's three husbands, he was the one who most generously encouraged the activity that makes the filming of her life worthwhile: her writing. Colette's novels are seen as little more than roguish reminders of a racy public and private life. Taking a literary life that was acute in every sense, Colette covers it with a film of dullness.

Such was clearly the idea behind the Fenice's presentation of the two operas on the same day. Production and design in both were by Pier Luigi Pizzi, offering a contrast, to English eyes, not unlike that between the current house styles of Covent Garden and the Coliseum. Thus *Aroldo* was given the full-barn storming treatment, with sets exquisitely reproducing nineteenth-century décor, framed by a painted curtain, stylized front-stage gesture, and restrained soloists, including Lucia Aliberti's pinchbeck Calas.

Those who stayed for *Stiffelio* were rewarded with something so entirely different in terms of production values and overall conviction that it was hard to believe most of the music had been heard only two hours earlier. The excitement of the occasion lay not solely in the sense of a case being made for the originality of the score, whose sequence of musical ideas inevitably suggests a pastiche for *Rigoletto*, *Traviata* and *Traviata*, but in the admirably realized intensity of the drama itself. Set within a don't Eugene O'Neill-like world of oil lamps, slat and bombazine, it culminates in the grave beauty of Stiffelio's forgiveness of the erring Lina before a kneeling congregation. Ellahn Inaba's conducting offered practical support to a strong cast, led by the baritone Brent Ellis as the hero's anguished and quiescently Verdiian father, and an outstanding Rosalind Plover, whose handling of Lina's tortured nobility grew in both dramatic and musical sensitivity through the evening.

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Fernand Léger's designs for the witch and the idol for *La Création du monde*, 1923. From Artists in the Theatre, an exhibition at the Hutton Gallery, Newcastle University, until February 21.

Of human folly

Wilfrid Mellers

NIGEL OSBORNE and DAVID FREEMAN
Hell's Angels
Royal Court Theatre

From its inception in the seventeenth century, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, opera and the opera house were focal points of society, enshrining the myths, if not the values, in the light of which people thought they lived. Those myths flourished in the wake of burgeoning capitalism; unsurprisingly, opera cost a lot of money. Though nowadays one would expect (some) people to be worried about this, it is still difficult to secure seats at the major opera houses of Europe, notwithstanding the high price of tickets. Moreover, some composers of our time have created fairly grand operas for these houses, and a few of them, notably Benjamin Britten, have made fortunes out of operas that are, in the old tradition, at once grand and good.

Even so there is, among younger composers, a feeling, if hardly a thought, that they ought not to write operas, especially grand ones, unless, like the octogenarian Alan Bush, they can turn them against the System; the disadvantage being that his operas don't get performed in the country that made him and them. Instead the fashion for what used to be called Music Theatre evolved during the 1950s and 1960s: a (cheaper) hybrid between orthodox operatic conventions and demotic techniques purloined from ritual, from folk drama, *commedia dell'arte*, Brechtian *Singspiel* and the like. This new opera, vaudeville act or charade by David Freeman and Nigel Osborne—one of the more successful composers of his generation—comes roughly into this category. Since no libretto came my way, it is difficult to be certain what it is about; but I think it is a Satyr (punningly spelled in Harry Partch's way) about the avifa of (post?) capitalist so-called civilization, in which the action years, with presumptively ironic effect, between heaven-and-hell and the real world as it may have been in 1494, and as it is today. Mortals mingle with gods and goddesses as they do in seventeenth-century operas like Cavalli's *La Calisto* (which is being produced at the Royal Court in tandem with *Hell's Angels*), or in the heroic operas of Handel. Handel knew what he was doing with his startling juxtapositions, since he had a coherent view of the interdependence of music and society. Cavalli didn't know, being muddled by his age's transitional scientific revolution, as we are bemused by our electronic one. As we might expect, Freeman and Osborne are closer to Cavalli than to Handel. Their piece hits at the Establishment, though its punches are unpunishing because its view is unpunished. The great English satirists—Johnson, Pope, Johnson—had yardsticks of attestation by which their destructive impulses could be measured; that we haven't is hardly Freeman's and Osborne's fault: a much greater artist, Auden, failed to bring off this now sadly dated "chirade".

Hell's Angels was dated almost before it was born. There is a lot of tiresome Auden-like populating prelates, blasphemers on altars, nude revels among the Borgias, who are presumably meant to seem nasty to us, the dead of an elegant (not quite naked) victim of AIDS. Jokes about theology and biblical history are hardly ever as crazily funny as the real thing; here they are very damp squibs, though Satan as usual has the best lines, which Richard Stuart delivers with gusto. Whether there's much beyond the had jokes is unclear; but the second act includes what seems to be a straight sermon on the horrors of capitalism, delivered by a corny Good Priest who is promptly snatched by the Church's minions. The speech written in soberly abstract prose but sung in lyrical parlando, is oddly affecting, as presented, with lucid tone and impeccable control, by Nigel Robson. He and all the singers play many parts, mythological, historical and contemporary. Marie Angel and Omar El-Zohbi as usual sing with impressive presence, giving definition to their protean roles. Tom McDonnell is splendidly articulate as God, as is only appropriate, even when God, as he died as the rest of us, thinks he's the Aynollah.

To have brought off such a farago would have called for genius of exceptional energy—such as Monteverdi displayed in *Poppea*. Mozart in *The Magic Flute*, or possibly, with astounding twentieth-century tenacity, Tippett in *The Knot Garden*, which was previously produced by this enterprising company. Osborne's score has no such energy, and little identity. The small band (directed by Diego Mason, with percussionists extraordinary James Holland even more brilliantly inventive noises while offering only a tedious and slickly between speech, *Sprechstimme* and arliso while never threatening to blossom into aria, let alone a tune: something I like in theatre music, though this may be because I'm a certain way charm; though they often sound like unintentional parody of Britten. The opera ends, lyrically, with the AIDS song; we meant to regard AIDS as a Scourge of God! At least the piece, if exasperatingly tedious, was not—perhaps because of the exasperation—exactly boring. This aged critic stayed awake, in the warm theatre, at the close of a long day. Wakefulness didn't, however, convince him that this morally suspect, cynically opportunistic presentation of human weakness justified the folly of the librettist and composer in embarking on it.

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Two successful entries in the Mobil Playwrights Competition, which was launched in London in October 1984, are to be given their world premiere performances by the Royal Exchange Theatre Company in Manchester. The two plays are *Mumbo Jumbo* by Robin Grier, and *The Act* by Richard Laing. *Mumbo Jumbo*, which was joint winner in the competition, was shortlisted. Nicholas Hytner will direct *Mumbo Jumbo*. Casper Wrede will direct *The Act*. The forthcoming season at the Royal Exchange will have an emphasis on new writing. The company will also stage *Behind the Veil*, the newly commissioned play by Jonathan Meade and Ridley Walker by Russell Hoban.

The very model of a Secretary-General

Conor Cruise O'Brien

KURT WALDHEIM

In the Eye of the Storm: The memoirs of Kurt Waldheim
278pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.
0297786784

Kurt Waldheim has a discreet and emollient approach to international affairs, and a pedestrian style. These characteristics stood him in good stead during his valuable and generally underestimated years (1972–82) as Secretary-General of the United Nations. But they are not characteristics that make for marvellous memoirs. *In the Eye of the Storm* is not a very long book (268 pages of text) but it seems a lot longer while you are reading it.

Yet there are some interesting and instructive things in it, and even some entertaining things, though the entertainment is not always intentional. One passage happily combines instruction, of a rather recondite kind, with human interest. Dr Waldheim is explaining what he calls "the ambiguous status a Secretary-General has to accept":

Under the United Nations protocol, he has the rank of Prime Minister and is very often given, especially in Third World countries, the treatment of a head of state. Not so in the Western world where the maximum protocol he receives is one of head of government. However, in the capitals of the super-powers, he is treated merely as a Foreign Minister. The only exception occurred on the occasion of my first official visit to President Carter early in 1977—he vibrantly wanted to upgrade the role of the United Nations. Needless to say, I was always glad to attend international meetings, whatever the status accorded me, as long as I felt that my role could be useful.

But gladder, one may feel, to attend some meetings, than others.

Dr Waldheim, during his tenure as Secretary-General, travelled a prodigious amount, and met every terrestrial potentate of his day (and the Pope as well, though not Imam Khomeini). What he has to say about the leaders is generally not illuminating: this one is "impressive", that other "charismatic" and so on. Occasionally he chronicles jokes by the great. Thus he gives an example of "the dry if rather heavy sense of humour" of Andrei Gromyko as manifested at a lunch given in Gromyko's honour at the Secretary-General's residence by the East River in Manhattan on a summer's day. This conjuncture drew from the Soviet Foreign Minister (as he then was) the following quip: "I wish the climate in international affairs was as fine as the climate outside this room, but unfortunately it is not so." Edmund Burke once said, about a controversial point made against him by some apologist for the French Revolution: "That argument would do very well, with a lamp-post for its second." I would laugh at that Gromyko joke, if the alternative were the Lublanka.

Waldheim toured all the African states, in 1974, and met all the Top Africans (as was indeed his duty). Most of his reminiscences of this tour are in his usual vein, complimentary to potentates, and tedious to readers. But there is just one passage which is startlingly different, and unforgettable. It concerns a visit to Conakry, Guinea, at the invitation of Sekou Touré ("a tall, good-looking rather impressive figure"), then the "Marxist" dictator of that unfortunate country. The passage runs:

The women were all wearing long white robes, dancing up to below the box to show their reverence to the great leader of their country. Two women suddenly he turned to me and said: "You are that lady there? She is dancing to show her gratitude because I had her husband executed—a traitor who was denounced by his own family. People understand that I did the right thing, because he was a traitor, and they know and feel that the interests of the country have priority over family links. I think this is one of our greatest achievements." I was absolutely appalled by this statement, which made me realize the pressure under which these people had lived.

That could be out of Graham Greene's *The Comedians*, with "the Presidential candidate" as the narrator.

As a memorialist, Waldheim is not in the first class, nor yet the second. As an international diplomatist he was, however, a highly competent, cautious professional: exactly the combination of qualities which the super-powers agree in regarding as desirable in a

Secretary-General of the United Nations. He was able to serve, accordingly, in that capacity, for two full terms, and came very near to getting a third one, which would have been a record. The trick of being elected Secretary-General—and it is quite a trick—is to get the support of the five permanent members of the Security Council: Britain, France, China, the Soviet Union, the United States. If any one of these is obdurate against you, you are a non-starter, but if you can line up the Five, you can expect safe majorities both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly, and you are elected.

In 1982, Waldheim had the support of four out of the Five. The reason for Soviet support was put to the candidate by Ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky, with Muscovite tact: "An old shoe fits better than a new one." Britain, France and the United States felt the same way. With Waldheim, you knew where you were; with Waldheim there would be no surprises. The Chinese, however, had had enough of the old shoe, so out it went.

He says he doesn't know why the Chinese blocked him, but the reasons seem fairly clear. Most of the Third World countries felt it was time for a non-European Secretary-General. Three out of the four Secretaries-General—Trygve Lie, Dag Hammarskjöld and Waldheim himself—had been Europeans. For the third European Secretary-General to be looking for a third term was felt to be pushing it a bit. The only non-European Secretary-General—U Thant—had retired after two terms.

China likes, when it can, to make the point that China, and not the Soviet Union, is the true champion of the Third World. And Waldheim's candidature—supported by the Soviet Union, and unpopular with the Third World—gave the Chinese an ideal opportunity to make that favourite international point, economically on their part, but at Waldheim's expense. There was nothing inscrutable about their decision.

Through that Chinese *coup de grâce*, the United Nations lost a diplomatist, and an international civil servant, of great experience. Indeed Waldheim brought much more, and more relevant, international political experience to his responsibilities as Secretary-General, when he was first appointed, than any of his predecessors. He had entered the small and newly constituted Foreign Service of "restored" Austria in 1945. As Austria had become part of the Third Reich, through the 1938 *Anschluss*, Waldheim served in the German Army on the Eastern Front during the Second World War. He was wounded. Very early in his Foreign Service career, he became private secretary to the Foreign Minister, the astute Karl Gruber. Gruber, an exigent boss, thought well of him and Waldheim's career began to look bright. The grounds for Gruber's esteem, reported by Waldheim, are significant. "If Waldheim tells me we can't do anything about a problem, I believe him." So, from the beginning of his career, Waldheim's strong suit was already apparent in his respect for limits. Patiently, he explored the limits of the possible, and scrupulously he respected them. He was not brilliant, and not ideological; he was sound, realistic and very, very careful. Already he was manifesting the combination of qualities that would later recommend him to the Powers as a suitable Secretary-General: one who would not "rock the boat", as all his predecessors had rocked it.

The Austrian Foreign Service, in the early stages of Waldheim's career, was an ideal place to learn about the realities of international politics, and Waldheim's qualities were those of a good learner, untrammelled by preconceptions, theories or political emotions. Austria, in the mid-1950s, was for a time at the centre of international politics. The State Treaty of May 15, 1955—ending the Allied occupations of and division of Austria; the understanding that she would be permanently neutral—remains one of the few positive achievements of post-war diplomacy. And the Austrian contribution to that outcome—through those qualities which Waldheim seems to have shared with his professional colleagues—was considerable. As Waldheim puts it: "Austrian diplomacy had found a formula that gave the country a universally acceptable role in post-war Europe."

That may seem to overstate the contribution of Austria to a Treaty signed by the superpowers, and Britain and France, as well as by Austria. But I don't really think Waldheim is exaggerating here. Without Austrian realism, patience, and the unusually high virtue which the Austrian tradition attaches to diplomacy, I doubt whether the State Treaty could have come into being.

Waldheim's career continued to prosper. When, after the conclusion of the Treaty, Austria was admitted to the United Nations, it was Waldheim who led the Austrian delegation to their seats. Later, he became Director-General of Political Affairs at Vienna; then Ambassador to the United Nations; then Foreign Minister. In 1971, he was narrowly defeated in the Austrian Presidential elections. He then returned to the United Nations and in the following year got himself elected Secretary-General.

As it happens, I worked quite closely with Waldheim for a brief period at the United Nations, on one particular problem, of special importance to Austria. The problem was that of the South Tyrol or, in United Nations parlance, "The question of Bolzano/Bozen". The year was 1960. As I think the Bolzano/Bozen episode sheds a little light both on some of the workings of the UN, and on Waldheim as a practitioner, I shall try to put the episode in focus here.

1960 was a watershed year in the history of the United Nations (even apart from being the year when Khrushchev banged his shoe on his desk). It was the year of a massive entry of "new nations", or at any rate new states, mainly from Africa. It was also the last year of the Eisenhower administration. The combination of the new entry with the old US Administration, was a tricky one, making General Assembly voting patterns that year exceptionally hard to predict.

This was a period when people still cared about General Assembly voting patterns and tried to predict them. Indeed, a General Assembly vote was still regarded in the West as imbued with exceptionally high moral authority. It was customary, during the late 1940s and most of the 50s, for American political leaders to refer to the Assembly as "the moral conscience of mankind". There was a sound political basis for this ethical assessment. During this period, the United States, through its alliances and hegemonies, could control enough votes in the Assembly—that is to say, two-thirds of those voting—to carry any proposition to which it attached importance. So it was quite natural for US statesmen to put a halo round that safe two-thirds. It was comforting, and electorally most helpful, for a President of the United States to know that "the moral conscience of mankind" stood ready to endorse whatever course he might choose to follow in international affairs.

That is why General Assembly votes were important in those days. The trouble was that, by 1960, American influence over the Assembly was slipping, and the perceived moral authority of the Assembly was also slipping but not quite *pro rata*; a halo, once in place, takes time to fade. So the Americans were a bit tense, and a bit testy; still very influential, but unsure of the extent of their influence. The new entry were rather brash, anxious to display their independence, but also worried about what might happen if they did.

On these choppy and uncharted waters of the enlarged General Assembly, the Austrian Government felt obliged to launch its fragile vessel, the question of Bolzano/Bozen, which figured, at Austria's request, on the Assembly's agenda. This was an exercise not in irrelevance, but rather in trying to defuse irrelevance; a controlled letting off of steam, like much else that goes on at the United Nations. The Austrians also hoped that, as a result of the publicity, and the embarrassment to NATO, the Americans would put some pressure on the Italians to be a little less ham-fisted in their dealings with the Germanophone inhabitants of Bolzano/Bozen, and so produce less fuel for neo-Nazi type irrelevance in Austria.

The Italians were naturally annoyed with the Austrians, as were the Americans (who saw themselves as being blackmailed politically). The US delegation put in a draft resolution which, if carried, would have humiliated Austria—and produced among the Austrian people the reverse effects to those the Austrian Government was hoping for. The United

States still could expect to get, at the least, rather more than half the votes, on anything it cared about. If enough of the new entry abstained, they would get their two-thirds, and the Austrians a nasty rebuff. And many of the new entry were disposed to abstain; this was a parochial intra-European quarrel, no business of Africans—except to get it over with as quickly as possible, and on to the interesting bits of the agenda.

So the Austrians were in trouble. It was at this point that Waldheim approached me, in one of the corridors. He produced a draft resolution, to be offered in place of the American one. The draft resolution was a bland, innocuous document: it did no more than invite the parties to try to solve their differences in a peaceful, just and neighbourly manner. But it was better, from Waldheim's point of view, than having "the moral conscience of mankind" jump on Austria with both feet. He said that he hoped the Irish Delegation would propose this resolution.

As usual, he had done his homework. Ireland, too, was outside NATO. Ireland too had its "Bolzano/Bozen", in the North. Ireland too might need, some day, to put that question on the agenda; probably for much the same reasons as those for which the Austrians had taken that step. And Ireland, because of its "anti-colonial" history, had a greater capacity to influence American and Asian votes than any other European country. (This was so, in those days. Later, Third World countries could see that, in practice, Ireland generally—though not invariably—voted with the West. But our halo, too, took time to fade.)

And it all worked, precisely as Waldheim had intended. The Irish Delegation approved his draft, and I proposed it in the Special Political Committee. It worked like a charm. The resolution was intended to get Austria off the hook, but the new African delegates saw it as getting them off the hook, enabling them to take neither side (as they thought) in a quarrel which didn't concern them. As delegate after delegate spoke in favour of the Irish (or Waldheim) resolution, an Italian delegate was heard to exclaim "Caporetto!" The American resolution was withdrawn, and the Irish one carried unanimously. The Americans were quite cross with me, but not a bit cross with Waldheim, who hadn't uttered a word, in public, throughout these proceedings.

In the Bolzano/Bozen affair, then, I had a rare opportunity of studying the Waldheim *modus operandi* at close quarters. Later, watching from a distance his conduct as Secretary-General, I could recognize some familiar characteristics: the discreet and effaced style; the accurate assessment of restricted possibilities; the setting of modest objectives; and the patient and even crafty pursuit of the same.

Mostly, a Secretary-General has to be content to make what he can of whatever the hazard of events, and the interests of the Powers, may toss in his direction. Waldheim was not lucky in what was tossed his way, during his ten years as Secretary-General. He got pretty hopeless stuff: things like Cyprus, or Lebanon, where there was nothing much the UN could do, except patch up, clean up, look after refugees, and generally make things a little less intolerable for local people, and a little less dangerous internationally than they might otherwise have been. Those were the things that were left to the UN, so Waldheim did them. He also managed to retain the confidence of the Powers (with the partial late and terminal exception of China) for the UN Secretariat, at a time when the General Assembly was getting the UN, as a whole, an increasingly bad name. His discreet, and even rather fustian manner was an asset, in a period when over at the General Assembly the Joint was jumping, and sets like "Zionism equals Racism" (November 10, 1975) were rolling them in the aisles; Waldheim kept the United Nations in being, and its secretariat trusted, during a most difficult period. If you compare what was happening over at Unesco under Secretary-General Amadou Mokhtar M'Bow, over the same period, you can appreciate the significance of the quiet services rendered to the United Nations by Kurt Waldheim.

You may think perhaps that it would not have mattered much if the United Nations had collapsed, as Unesco appears to be doing. I

don't share this view. I believe the world would be a significantly more dangerous place even than it now is, if the United Nations did not exist. It can help to avert, or reduce, or limit, dangers of major international conflict in the following ways.

First, in cases of major confrontation between the superpowers, the UN is a precious resource: for gaining time; for allowing the parties to let off steam in public, while meeting in private without publicity; and (not least) for the staging of public presentations which enable the party which wishes to back away to do so with minimal loss of face. In the most dangerous case of superpower confrontation to date, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the United Nations was useful in such ways as these. Secretary-General U Thant, by helping to save Khrushchev's face, made it marginally easier for Khrushchev to back away. Only marginally; but what man would care to see the margin of safety cut, in such circumstances? And who, living contemplated the ultimate brink, would wish to dispense with the institution whose principal function is to maintain, and where possible increase, the margin?

Second, in conditions with less immediately apocalyptic implications, the United Nations – and in particular the Security Council – is useful in rather similar ways. The Security Council – following appeals to it by parties in regional disputes – brings together the superpowers, and medium powers and others, in relation to every crisis. What the public is then treated to, almost invariably, is yet another "failure of the United Nations"; another local scrap, followed by some rather forlorn patching up; a token

force along a peace-line, later to be bundled out, perhaps, by one of the local parties, which has decided it no longer needs a peace-line. The local failures are real, and tragic in their consequences. But there is a positive aspect even to the failures. The Security Council usually fails either to avert or to end local conflicts. But the contacts of the superpowers at the Security Council, in respect of each such crisis, have almost certainly helped in limiting the tendency of local conflicts to spread, and in minimizing adversarial superpower involvement. Furthermore each exercise in regional "crisis management" – and especially each failure in "crisis management" – is a practical lesson for each superpower about how the other perceives its own vital interests; and each lesson reduces, just a little, the dangers of unintended confrontation. If the equivalent of a Security Council had existed from, say, 1875 on, the Balkan wars would not have been avoided or abbreviated; but enough might have been learnt from them to make it possible to avoid the First World War.

Whether at high moments of superpower confrontation, or at lower levels of "crisis management", it is crucial that the chief officer of this institution should retain the confidence of both superpowers. The first two Secretaries-General – Trygve Lie and Dag Hammarskjöld – gained so much of the confidence of one superpower (the United States) that they lost the confidence of the other. U Thant, at the time of the missile crisis, had the confidence of both superpowers and was able to play his marginal, but significant role in resolving the crisis. Had his far more brilliant predecessor, Hammarskjöld, been still alive in 1962 – he was

killed in the crash at Ndola, in what is now Zambia, in September 1961 – he would probably have been unable to play any part in the crisis, since he had already lost the confidence of one of the superpowers.

Predictably, Waldheim does not approve of Hammarskjöld. Of him he writes, with unwelcome acerbity, that he "stretched the powers of his office with risky dynamism". (Furthermore, in *In the Eye of the Storm*, he misspells Hammarskjöld's name twice; not something one does to the name of a respected predecessor.) I was involved in the last phase of Hammarskjöld's "risky dynamism": the phase that cost him his life; and I dislike, here, Waldheim's language, as well as his spelling. The United Nations did not become involved in the Congo out of some risky dynamic whim of Hammarskjöld's; it was instructed to go in there by the Security Council, at the initiative of the Congo Government, which appealed to the United States, and then of the United States, which handed this hot potato to the United Nations. And once you were in the Congo, the only alternatives were risky dynamism and no less risky stagnation.

I found myself putting the question: "What would you have done, Kurt, if you'd been stuck with the Congo?" And then I figured out what Waldheim would have done, and I could see that it would make sense, both for the man himself, and for his office. He, personally, would have kept right out of the Congo. He would not, as Hammarskjöld did, have flown to the Congo, met Tshombe, quarrelled with Lumumba, and involved himself personally, and his office as well, in the fury and the mire of Congolese politics, and their international repercussions. Waldheim would have insulated his office and himself from as much as possible of all that.

Characteristically, one of his few recommendations, in *In the Eye of the Storm*, for reform of the United Nations, is that a post of

Deputy Secretary-General should be created. Deputy: the lad that carries the can. Waldheim, whether the post was officially created or not, would have provided himself with a Deputy for the Congo. Whenever the evolution of events there seriously displeased either superpower, he would have changed the Deputy. In this way, and in other ways, Waldheim would probably have managed to keep the confidence of both superpowers, and so safeguarded the functional utility of his office. And he would also have managed not to get himself killed in Ndola.

The Secretary-General, the Custodian of the Margin, needs to be a Waldheim rather than a Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjöld, with enormous panache, actually narrowed that margin significantly. I believe that Waldheim, with absolutely no panache whatever, significantly widened it.

Unfortunately *In the Eye of the Storm* is not revealing about how he did it, or about the workings of the United Nations. But then, if Waldheim had been the kind of person who could have been revealing about the United Nations, he could not have served it as effectively as he did; in a role which requires the winning of the confidence of opposing parties, through cultivating such habits of discretion that in the end you can no longer be revealing even when you decide to write your memoirs.

Guicciardini rather looked down on Machiavelli, not only for being a less competent diplomatist than he himself was, but also, and especially, for blurring out the secrets of the palazzo all over the piazza. Waldheim is definitely "school of Guicciardini", not "school of Machiavelli": no hunter he. That means that people will not exactly be queuing up, out there in the piazza, to buy *In the Eye of the Storm*. But then Dr Waldheim will hardly be expecting them to queue up. He has always been a person of modest and realistic expectations, and that is his strength.

A contented Croesus

Craig Brown

RUSSELL MILLER
The House of Getty
362pp. Michael Joseph. £12.95.
0718126017
ROBERT LENZNER
Getty: The richest man in the world
283pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
0091628407

Russell Miller and Robert Lenzner, both begin with the corpse of Getty. He may have been the world's richest man, he may have had an eight-and-a-half-inch penis, he may have possessed one of the greatest collections of art, he may have lived to be eighty-four years old, he may even have been, according to one friend, "the happiest man I ever met", but, Miller and Lenzner seem to be saying, at least he can't enjoy it all now.

Both of them have a personal loathing for their subject, though they rarely agree on what to loathe most. Miller thinks that Getty's privately printed book, *Europe in the 18th Century*, is "a scholarly work" and "impressive" whereas Lenzner thinks it "a stilted, banal compendium of facts". Lenzner judges Getty's huge party at Sutton Place in 1960 "a roaring success" whereas Miller describes it as a disaster, deciding somehow that Getty "resigned himself to the realisation that it was a party that was going to have to run its course". Miller dedicates his book "to my family, with heartfelt thanks that our name is not Getty"; and Lenzner, in his acknowledgements, thanks a long list of Getty's friends and acquaintances for what he describes as their "pungent, illuminating knowledge of the man". "Pungent" seems an odd choice of adjective for opinions such as Claus von Bülow's that he felt only "admiration, love and gratitude" towards Getty.

Neither writer allows Getty the simplest pleasure without first rubbishising it. Lenzner doesn't let him walk around a museum "no, he must 'doggedly' walk around it. Miller won't even allow Getty to enjoy teenage sex without attributing the perversity "to it. Both draw

condemnatory morals from the slightest infirmity: Miller captions a photograph of Getty looking at a lion cub "A solitary figure: the man who resolutely refused to pay his grandson's ransom, cultivating the special rapport he believed he had with animals and demonstrably lacking with his own family"; Lenzner quotes Getty as saying that keeping a Sutton Place cold "was good for the art", adding "proving once again that he cared more for his possessions than he did for people". In their desire for a wholehearted perception, both writers often contradict information that they themselves have thrown up. On page 181 of his book, Lenzner quotes Getty's decorative arts curator describing Getty "on hands and knees" inspecting an Oriental carpet. "He was obviously fascinated by it, loved it, and wanted to know and talk about it. I call that a passion." Yet on page 185 he happily announces that "few, if any, observers ever saw him exhibit, physically or emotionally, any great feeling about a work of art".

What did Getty do to earn such opprobrium? In the end, it seems that his most forgivable sin was to be content. In an extraordinary novel, he would have spent his last hours wracked with pain and gull; the full monstrosity of his life clearly revealed in all its cruelty and ineffectuality; and he would be begging forgiveness from one and all. But Lenzner supplied his two outstanding biographies with all the sins they could desire – from getting spaghetti in bed to refusing his grandson's ransom; from name-dropping to admitting Hitler during the 1930s – he resolutely refused to give them anything approaching the remotest of even the saddest truth, and requires to get their own back, they strip his luxuries of pleasure, his pleasures of enjoyment, his moments of humanity. In order to condemn a man's meanness and his coldness, they strip him of his charm, his wit and his taste. He was a nasty man, probably, but he was also a satisfied man, and this is not how stories are meant to go.

Jerome Kern: A biography (182pp. Robert 12.95, 0 86051 339 4) by Michael Friedman, first published in 1978, has recently been reissued in paperback.

Confusing the landmarks

Kenneth Minogue

GEORGE WATSON
The Idea of Liberalism: Studies for a new map of politics
172pp. Macmillan. £22.50 (paperback, £7.95).
0333387546

George Watson is a historian, literary critic and a regular practising Liberal. These are the strengths he brings to his project of redrawing the map of politics so as to bring it closer to reality. But reality can, of course, be "mapped" in different ways. Watson is primarily concerned to revise a kind of Mercator's projection of politics inherited from the French Revolution. This projection flattens out complexities in favour of a single terrain in which Socialism and Marxism dominate the left, Conservatism the right, while the centre is a confused plain where Liberals and Social Democrats struggle to sustain themselves.

It would be foolish to expect such a map to be adequate to post-industrial politics. Yet the habits of language perpetuate our dependence on these antique charts, and hence we find ourselves tumbling over precipices where the map indicates a solid plain, and lost in the desert when the chart tells us we have reached the top of a mountain. In principle, Watson is setting out to supply what we travellers all so badly need.

It certainly enables him to open up some interesting issues: Why do we think of revolution as essentially left-wing? However could we have come to imagine that State control of industry would benefit the working class? Claiming Roger Scruton as an ally on at least one point, Watson suggests that Mrs Thatcher has little to do with anything the word "Conservative" has traditionally meant. Above all, he is scornful of the mindless importation from the Continent of the jargon of left-centre-right to apply to Anglo-Saxon politics, a piece of nonsense which he thinks is tempting to intellectuals but wisely ignored by the population at large.

To expose inadequate cartography in this area is not excessively difficult because the names being used refer, rather confusingly, both to theories, which are subject to intellectual fashion, and to party programmes, which bend to circumstances – a distinction signalled here by capitalizing a name when it refers to a party, and leaving it in lower case when it refers to a theory. Both objects of reference are so complex that it is easy to point to internal contradictions. But it soon becomes clear that Watson is in the grip of an *a priori* dangerous for any political cartographer. It consists of a regular shuttling back and forth between the left and the right. "There is no greater taboo in modern political thought", he tells us, "than the essential conservatism of the socialist idea", where by "conservatism" he simply means a rather mindless addition to merely what is there. Before long, we are learning, contrariwise, of the extent to which such supposedly Conservative figures as businessmen can become bewitched by the socialist hatred of competition. In other words, for all his explicit dislike of the nineteenth-century spatialization of politics, he accepts it as the basis of most of his paradoxes.

Once we realize this, we can see the limits of the metaphor of cartography, at least as practised by one who frankly has his own partiality from which to view the world. For the partisan in politics is not like a geographer trying to map the ground, but rather like a fast-talking guide trying to fix our attention upon one feature rather than another. When Marx and Engels talked of the crisis of bourgeois society in the 1840s, they were not mapping anything, because it was not there to be mapped. They were writing a rather eccentric guidebook to the present, and setting up a signpost to a place off the map called "communism".

Given that the metaphor of mapping is limited, certain crucial things follow. One of them is that there is no single terrain to be mapped; but at least two radically distinct terrains often misdescribed by the same names. The policies and projects of Liberalism, for example, are of a quite different logical character from the comprehensive social analysis of

Marxism. Another consequence is that the big names of parties and theories cannot be treated as unitary, but must be seen as loose alliances of dispositions, arguments and proposals. Watson is not unaware of these points, but he is not always consistent in recognizing them.

He is certainly clear on the special character of Marxism as an inhabitant of this world, and the most striking and original parts of the book are those discussing the racist strain in Marx's opinions, Hitler's likely debt to Marx, and the relationship between Nazi and Communist exterminatory practices in this century. Quite how one ought to estimate Marx's insouciant view that the reactionary races of Europe – he names Basques, Highland Scots and South Slavs as examples – would have to be eliminated by the progress of history is a delicate matter of historical judgment, but there can be no mistaking the brutal dogmatism involved, and it justifies Watson in advancing a criterion for serious Marxist commitment which would, if implemented, instantly decimate the radical parties of Europe: If, as he suggests, one insists on taking one's political opinions from some superannuated nineteenth-century enthusiast, the least one can do is actually to read him. Watson has no doubt that a close reading turns up a great deal of repulsive material from which those few Marxists who have actually read it delicately avert their eyes. It is an essential part of this ostrichism that no one is likely to engage Watson in argument on the point, for it is characteristic of Marxism to hide in pedagogic holes-and-corners rather than engage in full-blooded controversy.

"The greatest single affect of Marx upon political thought has been to moralize politics in strikingly simple terms, good against evil", Watson writes, but he does not journey further into the evident paradox that a doctrine which insists that morality is essentially a bourgeois fraud should moralize everything it touches. Again, when he tells us that Marx never visited a factory and that Marxism is not less fantastic than Disraeli's Young England, the promising

connection does not get explored. And the reason is, I think, that Watson's literary strengths – including his gift for the apt aphorism – are also philosophical weaknesses.

Like many Liberals, he is keen to capitalize on what he calls "the wisdom of the Whigs". The Whigs are, indeed, a good political pedigree, and for this reason everybody claims them. Watson seems to think, however, that in order to reclaim the Whigs for Liberalism, he must defend a quite different thing, which Herbert Butterfield called "the Whig interpretation of history". Always game for a scrap, Watson identifies critics of the Whig interpretation as exponents of something called "relativism" and attributes it to a composite creature called "Butterfield-Oakeshott". Relativism is said to be the opinion that we can all agree about facts, but not about morality. Butterfield is said to have come dangerously close to the relativist doctrine that there is no such thing as evil when he wrote that the sinfulness of the characters the historian deals with does not constitute a historical problem because moral responsibility "lies altogether outside the particular world where the historian does his historical thinking".

This all seems to be a terrible misunderstanding. Butterfield, as a Methodist lay preacher, was in no doubt about the reality of evil; he could, however, distinguish between his being a Christian and his being a historian. Watson, by contrast, seems to think that everything must be lumped together in a comprehensive political commitment. The same insensitivity to essential distinctions appears when he attacks Oakeshott – here metamorphosed into "the archpriest of conservatism" – for sceptical relativism. Watson's attempt to convict the doctrines he criticizes of self-refutation is the dialectical equivalent of mud-wrestling. The problem is compounded when persona are crossed with doctrines:

"Impartiality" is itself a kind of partiality", as Roger Scruton has cheerfully remarked in the preface to his *Dictionary of Political Thought* (1982), echoing the philosophy of the conservative master Michael

Oakeshott. Morality, for Oakeshott, has no objective existence.

Scruton's epigram about impartiality does indeed suggest the radicalism of the 1960s, but what it obviously expresses is something altogether removed from scepticism: namely the clear, indeed dogmatic, conviction that there is only one right path in politics – the same conviction that Watson himself expresses. Scruton's conservatism is quite different from anything that might be called conservative in Oakeshott, who very seldom writes in a party or doctrinal idiom. Nor, of course, is he the kind of ethical subjectivist Watson takes him to be.

The upshot must be that, for all his liveliness and wit, Watson fails in his cartographic enterprise. Part of the reason is that he drifts off into a lot of idle talk about scepticism and value-judgments where he is not at home, and partly because he often does not know where his friends are. The central point is that liberalism, conservatism and socialism are all modifications (each of them named on the basis of a different principle of abstraction) of a single tradition of political wisdom, and any serious theorist or statesman is going to use the whole of that tradition according to need. To set up any of these party doctrines as the saving truth of politics is the political equivalent of heresy: mistaking the part for the whole. It is to mistake one's own pugnacity for the sum of wisdom.

In order to do this, the Watsonian landscape must contain only the simplest of identities. Thus Edmund Burke can appear here only as a Whig, not as a conservative, while Mrs Thatcher must be severed from conservatism. At the end of the book, Watson quotes Iris Murdoch on freedom as the epitome of Whig wisdom; but in doing so, he is claiming for Party what belongs to mankind. For it is not merely David Steel (to whom the book is dedicated) and George Watson who might agree that "Freedom is not an inconsequential clucking of one's wabout, it is the disciplined overcoming of self".

Beyond sovereignty

Lawrence Freedman

HELMUT SCHMIDT
A Grand Strategy for the West
159pp. Yale University Press. £10.95.
0300035357

Books written by retired statesmen promising "grand strategies" should be approached with caution. Associated with a release from the cares of high office is too often a sense of distance from the practical constraints that limit any government's freedom of manoeuvre. A self-image as a man of vision or as an authority on every conceivable issue can result in books that are short on analysis and long on platitudes.

Thankfully, Helmut Schmidt has not written such a book. He is clearly of the left in his values and his confidence in the potentially benign results of government action and international co-operation, but he has not been suddenly smitten by an idealism that had hitherto been kept under wraps. He remains a practical man of affairs. The result is a fine example of what social democracy can still offer.

The basic ideas expressed in *A Grand Strategy for the West* are largely extensions of those Schmidt propounded in government. There is the same objective of a more coherent Atlantic alliance, with the American influence being balanced by a closer European union, and détente is acknowledged to be as honourable a goal as defence. The problem he identifies is one of outmoded notions of sovereignty, which leads nations to pursue independent courses of action although these often work against their best long-term interests. His key examples are those of France in security policy and Britain in economic policy.

In this letter respect the book makes depressing reading. It provides another illustration of the price we are now paying in Britain for years of failure to develop and define a positive European policy instead of just a grudging association. Schmidt confesses that his attractions have been transferred away from

Britain, apparently out of irritation with our economic short-sightedness and refusal to cast in our lot with the other European nations. His judgment, which he admits may be harsh, is that "The British will join the club only if they cannot prevent it from being successful". Schmidt now declares himself to be a Francophile – when he was in government, this preference was reflected in a willingness to tolerate French nonsense far more readily than British.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is not much here about German nonsense. Germany has rehabilitated itself but, with its divisions and vulnerabilities, it is still paying the price of its past misdeeds. Schmidt was as responsible as anyone else for ensuring that this new, less inhibited Germany was taken more seriously by others, yet he still shows a reluctance to take hard decisions, preferring French leadership in Europe to a situation where Germany has to take positive initiatives on its own.

It is in the area where Germany still feels least at ease – security – that one meets with the most distinctive shift in emphasis from the policies Schmidt adopted when he was defence minister and Chancellor. He now shows a much more explicit desire to rely on conventional and not nuclear deterrence. However, this apparent shift will come as no surprise to those aware of a Schmidt of an earlier vintage, who published in 1961 one of the first major post-war contributions to strategic thought in Germany: *Defence or Retaliation*.

The book began as a series of lectures given at Yale University, and much of it is taken up with an attempt to explain Europe to an American audience. Schmidt is clearly well practised in pointing out to Americans the ways in which their policies and behaviour can appear to be erratic and curious, even to their friends: he alleges how little the Strategic Defence Initiative offers a citizen of Hamburg, and the problems which are being caused for others by the United States' budget deficit, whatever the short-term boost this may have given to American standards of living.

A final theme is the necessity for Western co-operation in addressing some of the most

dangerous problems in the Third World. In one of his best chapters Schmidt addresses the problems of Latin American indebtedness; Central American instability; conflict in the Middle East; and the growing importance of China and Japan. He is impressive here because he recognizes the distinctive nature of each region, and does not fall into the trap of assuming that everything is just part of a great "North-South" problem. His answers are practical – they do not require a suspension of political belief – but imaginative and honest in their recognition of the economic implications for the West. Above all the countries involved need to co-operate.

Schmidt concludes with what he describes as a "conceivable best case on the basis of joint efforts, making use of all the intellectual, diplomatic, economic, and military potentials and instruments at our disposal". This is his "grand strategy". Few would agree with all his proposals but they contain much good sense. It is hard to imagine a better agenda for the next seven-nation economic summit.

The United States and the World Economy: Policy alternatives for new realities (123pp. Westview, distributed by Bowker. Paperback, £15.25, 0 8133 7003 5) edited by John H. Yocheleson examines the main challenges facing the United States and its major Western trading partners in the light of the dramatic changes in the international economy that have occurred during the last fifteen years: the shift from the gold standard to floating exchange rates, the explosion of oil prices followed by their equally sudden collapse, the Third World debt, the emergence of new competitors to the Western industrialized countries and so on. The five essays in this volume include "Outlook for U.S. Economic Diplomacy: Europe and the Pacific Basin" by John H. Yocheleson, "Trade Policy and Trade Negotiations in the 1980s" by Harold B. Malmgren, "Business Cycles, Macroeconomic Policy, and U.S. Industrial Performance" by Gordon Riehlard and "The United States and the new Technological Competition" by Stephen A. Merrill.

A revolution of choices

J. R. Pole

ROBERT H. WIEBE
The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion
 427pp. New York: Knopf. \$25 (paperback, £9.95).
 0394535839

Robert H. Wiebe, who has long shown a propensity for viewing American society as a whole, and from a very considerable elevation, attempts in his new book to impose unity on a difficult period by employing certain overarching concepts.

The first of these is that of the gentry society which controlled politics in the states and was far enough in control of events to found, ratify and launch the Constitution, and then to form the Federal Government. "By the 1780's", Professor Wiebe says, "America's gentry shared a common agenda for public affairs." All the political struggles of the next generation, in effect until the end of Monroe's presidency, were acted out within the gentry's basic, shared assumptions. This old order crumbled not only with western expansion getting beyond any eastern power of control, but with a "Revolution of Choices" which consti-

tuted the real process of democratization; the political democracy for which the Jackson era is famous comes as a sort of by-product of this social upheaval.

Wiebe then introduces a concept of "parallel development" which in turn provides a partial explanation for the American concepts of liberty, democracy and even equality. This democracy defines Americans in terms that exclude large classes of people who were present in an American territory – notably the Indians, now called "native Americans" – and of course the blacks, on whose labour much of the society to a greater or lesser extent depended. The other great fissure which interests Wiebe does not arise from the growing subtleties of class and status but only from a very broad distinction between those who survive and those who do not. A growing class of underdogs both north and south had nothing to gain from the democratic process and had a diminishing leverage on the system. But this underclass did not accept the dismissal of its heritage, and by the twentieth century it claimed as common ground much of the culture that in the nineteenth century had distinguished the upper class – notably its hostility to monopoly.

Few historians are likely to quarrel with Wiebe's concept of gentry hegemony in the early Republic, or of the gradual decline at least at this form of hegemony; Dixon Ryan

Fox's monograph, *The Decline of Aristocracy in the State of New York*, appeared so long ago as 1919, and the theme has been open to refinement as well as restatement. For present purposes the question is how much of early American history it explains. Wiebe is right to observe that the party conflicts of the 1790s were based on "a common brand of gentry government"; but when he then says that the differences were over nothing more than "the interior design of the same gentry house", he trivializes the whole meaning of the struggle to those who were engaged in it. Later he recognizes this aspect more clearly with the admission that, in Jefferson's mind, Hamilton's policy would erode "the very foundations" of the new government. According to Wiebe, gentry rule meant the delegation of large areas to personal discretion. No doubt this was and is true, especially at the level of the county bench; but this emphasis seriously underestimates the importance of the commitment, eloquently stated in the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights of 1780, to "a government of laws and not of men" – a republican commitment if ever there was one.

To describe John Marshall as the embodiment of "gentry norms" in turn does little to explain why he thought they were best safeguarded in a strong form of government or why Jefferson, that other apostle of the gentry, should have been so venomously opposed to him. Jefferson's assault on the judiciary failed; but it did not represent any sort of gentry consensus about the style and aims of government. Wiebe does not make it any easier to understand what was at stake in this conflict when he compares the harmony that Jefferson induced in his cabinet with the harmony Marshall brought about in his court.

Wiebe deals with many of the substantive themes in social development to far more convincing effect. There is an excellent account of the democratic belief that every man had a right to a bank loan; and he argues most interestingly that the credit network, far from being ever more remote and impersonal as economic historians have maintained, really depended on a complex chain of personal business relationships. The diffusion of capitalist enterprise before the Civil War, he argues, reduced the prospects for capital accumulation, eroding rather than advancing industrial growth.

With the revolution of choices came a demo-

cratization of opportunity. Equality, Wiebe aptly observes, had formerly been a defensive concept, concerned with the protection of rights; henceforward it became an aggressive idea, and it is here we might have expected to find of "equality of opportunity" which, as Eric Foner has shown, became one of the catchwords of the new Republican party. But Wiebe eschews this kind of abstraction even while he relies on the ideas they convey. Words such as "liberty", "individualism" and "equality" play little part in his vocabulary, and do not even appear in his index. It is not quite clear whether the "parallelism" which he discovers as a virtual principle of American development is intended to represent a principle inherent in the system or is a happy but accidental consequence of American geography. In either case it was clearly under threat before the end of his period.

This book has the merits of scale, intellectual subtlety, compendious (though not perhaps for the telling quotation and incident. It makes a serious contribution to the large literature of social interpretation, and will undoubtedly contribute substantially to the ways in which American history is understood by coming generations. For those reasons it is worth reading that it does less than justice to some of the theoretical aspects of the problems with which the men (and in rare cases women) he writes about thought they were engaged; legal issues are treated with varying degrees of depth, but the Charles River Bridge case, which for the first time brought the Supreme Court into the arena of party politics, deserved more analysis.

The themes of immigration and religious conflict make a late appearance. Presumably in Wiebe's overall scheme, they represent the gradual collapse of "parallelism", which seems to have depended on a great measure of assumed homogeneity to the aims and character of the numerous parallel groups. For most of his period of seventy to eighty years, Professor Wiebe assumes a society which for all its varieties reveals a remarkably stable consistency. More specific attention to the character of urban history might have made this picture rather muddier. Even the anti-slavery movement appears as a seemingly incidental force, created by, rather than acting on, the tides of social change. It is difficult in Wiebe's pages to believe in its redemptive passion.

Colonial Celts

Bernard Aspinwall

NED C. LANDSMAN
Scotland and Its First American Colony, 1683-1765
 360pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £25.20.
 0691046980

The traditional notion that the most inviting prospect for a Scotsman was the road to England is in need of revision: it was, more accurately, the diminishing sight of the homeland he sailed to fame and fortune in America. The evidence provided by Ned Landsman's meticulous study of the Scots in East New Jersey is very persuasive. The pioneers of a much neglected ethnic group, these Scottish colonists took distinctive social and religious qualities with them to the New World, which enabled them to develop and prosper among the English colonists.

In early years the dominant elements were Quakers and Episcopalians, usually the younger sons or brothers of landed proprietors from Aberdeenshire, and to a lesser extent from Edinburgh and Kelso, who came with friends, relatives and servants; some 600 arrived in the first ten years. Closely linked through religion and blood, they reflected the old hierarchical structures, customs and traditions of their home areas. The large proprietary estate of north-east Scotland was to be their model. Personal servants were preferable to independent tenants and about half of the early settlers were indentured servants who were settled in model Scottish towns like Perth Town.

People travelling later, from Virginia and the

south-west, held different notions. They came from an area with numerous smallholdings, a vigorous democratic religion and an increasingly diversified economy, and shared the entrepreneurial mentality of their native region. Like the merchants of Glasgow, they invested in land improvements. As colonial landownership became more democratic and more widely diffused, so greater emphasis was placed upon commercial undertakings in mining, textiles and transport – a diversity encouraged by the Scottish tradition of equal inheritance, whether in land or cash. These pressures to improve limited resources further encouraged social mobility and Scots were scattered throughout the colony, though held together by an extraordinary extended family network.

By the early eighteenth century pressures to conform greatly intensified under the impact of the evangelical revival, the Jacobite threat and the growing numbers of Presbyterian immigrants. Landsman suggests that there was almost a nativistic revival in support of traditional "Scottish values". Independence of mind supported by the familial network in the colony further contributed to Scottish success. Large numbers achieved ownership of property, although the Scots constituted only one fifth of the population of central Jersey.

By the eve of the American Revolution, the Scots had accomplished a quiet social and economic revolution of their own, largely in response to the changing character of Scottish immigrants. He demonstrates the complexity and dynamism of the relationship between the colony and Scotland, which proved increasingly and continuously corrosive of the "settling" social order on both sides of the Atlantic. This is an impressive and readable account of a neglected group of early Americans.

Between silver and gold

B. S. Pullan

FREDERIC C. LANE and REINHOLD C. MUELLER
Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice
 Volume One: Coins and Moneys of Account
 684pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$43.20.
 0801831571

Thomas Coryat, the Jacobean traveller, wrote: "whereas the Venetian ducat is much spoken of, you must consider that the word ducat hath not signifie any one certain coyne. But many several pieces do concur to make one ducat, namely six livers and two gazets, which doe countervail four shillings and eightpence of our money." This portly and handsome volume, the first of two, treats the intractable subject of the dual role of money, as a means of exchange and as a standard of value. It examines the relationship between the hard cash of the market and the ideal money employed by bank-keepers, and concentrates heavily on a period – the fourteenth century – in which the system of accounting was far more confused than the one which Coryat concisely described.

The work is the fruit of an important collaboration, extending over some twelve years, between the doyen of Venetian economic historians, the late Frederic C. Lane, and his friend and pupil Reinhold Mueller. In a brisk preface well suited to a business history, the nature of their partnership is explained: responsibility for the final form of the text is

shared, but this first volume is largely Lane's. It is certainly imbued with his special qualities. Though far from indifferent to economic theory, Lane was determined to understand in precise detail the mechanics of the processes by which wealth was accumulated and lost; the instruments of early capitalism were never to him mere abstractions or dry statistics, but very tangible realities. The merchants he studied, here and elsewhere, seldom emerge as people – not even Andrea Barbarigo or Alessandro Magno. But with Lane the reader smells the spices, feels the cotton, and cons the books of accounts; he explores the ships' architecture, measures their capacity and appraises the timber used to build them. Now he can also weigh the coins of the Venetian Mint, and scrutinize them – the illustrations are copious – with the shrewd and practised eye of the Venetian money-changers who sifted piles of specie in search of the good coins which would serve for the export trade, and obeyed Gresham's law long before Gresham formulated it. As always, Lane's expository style is one of clarity and sobriety. Based on sharp definition, both of the language of medieval documents and of modern terms, it eschews both jargon and superlatives, invariably preferring the solution of the intricate but finite problem to the construction of the bold but flatulent hypothesis.

While some parts of the book are avowedly designed for specialists in the field of medieval economic history, it offers much of interest to general historians and to those who seek a broad understanding of the sources of Venetian prosperity. There is an impressive account of Venice's importance as a relatively free

market for bullion and of the attractions she exerted on foreign merchants dealing in silver and gold. The rationale behind the issue of each new coin, starting with the silver *grossi* of Enrico Dandolo, is painstakingly explored, and there is a careful discussion of the various considerations which determined the value of any particular piece of money at a particular time – metallic content, wear and tear, supply and demand, mint charges, popular custom and governmental decrees. Given the imperfections of the surviving sources, values have to be discussed without specific reference to the prices of goods, and there is much talk of the ratios between silver and gold. But the authors succeed in showing why these things mattered, and in portraying their importance for an entrepôt placed between eastern regions where you bought in silver and western markets where you sold in gold. There is an interesting reconstruction of the industrial processes in the Mint, another important example of a communal workshop where craftsmen (who remained craftsmen, and never became workers on an assembly line) were concentrated for the purposes of security and quality control.

Above all, the authors make illuminating attempts to establish the peculiarities of Venetian policies by a judicious use of comparisons, especially with such diverse régimes as those of England and Florence. Venice, no feudal lordship, is depicted as a power which made relatively small profits out of its seigneurial right to mint coin, for it relied rather on its opportunities to tax the import of bullion. The Venetian government was not in the habit of

calling in coins and then reissuing them at the same legal value but with less precious metal to justify it. Venetians always effected their reductions in metallic content by issuing new and appreciably different coins, set apart from the good old moneys even when they bore the same names. Not surprisingly, the book concentrates chiefly on the moneys used in international trade, paying rather less attention to those which served for the payment of wages and for the local markets. But the general principles enunciated will be of value to general historians striving to understand such later events as the great crisis caused soon after 1600 by the Venetian government's issue of base and all too imitable *quattrini*. As the Venetian patrician Nicolò Contarini so graphically recorded, the Mint's antics and the misconduct of neighbouring seigneurs provoked a catastrophic collapse of confidence in small money, and "Confusion and unrest began to spread, because nobody now knew what money he had".

In some ways this stout volume provides a more fitting monument to Lane than his *Venice: A maritime republic*, which, though widely praised, was also criticized with varying degrees of gentleness and brutality for its failure to present a total view of the Venetian state, and for a certain soullessness in its approach to Venetian civilization. Throughout his last book, published half a century after his first, Lane is in his element. The collaboration with Mueller (to whom much credit is surely due) bears witness to the continued influence on economic history of the sober and honest tradition for which Lane stood.

Italy before Rome

David Ridgway

MASSIMO PALIOTTINO
Storia della prima Italia
 253pp. Milan: Rusconi. L20,000.

Massimo Paliottino's talent for synthesis was first seen as long ago as 1942, when his classic *Etruscologia* suggested that Etruscan archaeology, art, history and language amounted to something other than an enigmatic prologue to Roman history. Since then, no one has worked harder to convince us further that there is more to the Etruscans than mystery. It is also true that no one has a finer appreciation of the fact that there is more to pre-Roman Italy than the Etruscans. Or, as Paliottino himself put it in the second English edition of *Etruscologia* (The Etruscans, 1975): "the concept of an 'Etruscan world' isolated, intrusive and virtually antithetic to an 'Italic world' is rapidly becoming a myth".

The process has come to fruition in this fresh and persuasive essay, a succinct "History of early Italy" conceived in its own right as no less deserving of our attention than its contemporary Greek and later Roman counterparts. No less deserving, but remarkably difficult to achieve, and not only because it has not been done before. Apart from the non-Italic Etruscans, many different peoples were at large in the Italian peninsula and in Sicily between the end of the Bronze Age and unification by Rome, and ancient written sources concerning them are not always helpful (or even extant). It follows that the reconstruction of their history calls for a very special combination of interpretative skills, and above all for the superhuman act of will involved in discarding traditional Rome-tinted spectacles: only thus can the historian avoid the elementary but hitherto universal error of assessing early Etruscan-Italic affairs in the light of subsequent events. Unlike J. Whaimough in 1937, Paliottino has written a book that could not possibly be called *The Foundations of Roman Italy*, a title that implies evolution and culmination rather than the progress and completion of a coherent and autonomous historical cycle. Symptomatically, it is not until the epilogue of the present work that we are gently reminded of the non-Roman Italic antecedents of many Latin authors – among them Cicero (from the Volscian hill-town of Arpinum) and Horace (born at Peuce-tian Venusia in Apulia).

Before we reach the period of *sopravvivenze e riviviscenze*, Paliottino reviews his vast and various mosaic of pre-Roman peoples, languages, artistic traditions, institutions (mainly perceptible in inscriptions) and degrees of cultural development. His method is not to provide a set of encyclopaedia entries running from the Aequi to the Volsci, but rather to assess relationships, and to compare and contrast local reactions to supra-local phenomena such as the establishment on Italian soil of Mycenaean trading stations and Greek colonies. The pattern of interlocking experiences that emerges from this *considerazione unitaria* is complex, greater than the sum of its parts and owes much to the enormous advances made in recent years by Italian archaeology. This is as it should be, for every single new discovery is increasingly exploited nowadays in the comprehensive consideration of widely differing areas. One thinks, for example, of the fifth-century painted Tomb of the Diver at Paestum; and the common ground it revealed with Etruscan tomb-painting of the same date. More profitably still, the inscribed gold tablets from Paliottino's own excavation at the Etruscan sanctuary at Pyrgi united epigraphists, historians and linguists in an investigation which extended far beyond the confines of Etruria itself – notably to early Rome and Greek South Italy. It is not hard to see why Wilamowitz insisted in 1926 that *storia Italica* could and should be based primarily on the evidence of the monuments, or why it is only now that his challenge has been taken up.

The result is a stimulating and seamless narrative that guides us from origins to the fourth-century recession and crisis that followed the flourishing Archaic period (although to fifth centuries). And so to Rome, unity, and the eventual revival of Italic traditions in the official art of the late Empire – and in the names of most of Italy's modern administrative regions. This lucid and immensely readable account of the early stages in the eternal dialogue between national vocation and local diversity in Italy bears impressive witness to its author's ability, bippily undimmed by honours and high office, to evaluate and co-ordinate the mass of archaeological and other data he has done so much to expand.

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In and out of time

Alan Montefiore

RICHARD RORTY, J. B. SCHNEEWIND, QUENTIN SKINNER (Editors)
Philosophy in History: Essays on the historiography of philosophy
 403pp. Cambridge University Press.
 £27.50 (paperback, £7.95).
 0521 25352 7

Within the world of academic and more widely intellectual discourse and institutions there are to be found at any one time a great number of more or less well delimited, more or less overlapping subject areas or disciplines. These disciplines will, of course, have their histories – the histories of how they came to be differentiated from or re-integrated with each other and the histories of how and by whom they have been conceived and pursued in the past. But – so it would generally be held – their present study and pursuit in no way depends on the learning or study of their histories; an apprentice may become a top-class modern mathematician without having to spend – even perhaps waste – any of his time on the history of mathematics, just as one may learn to become a chess champion without having to study the history of chess as such.

What of a man struck by a total amnesia and thus finding himself, though still possessed of his basic faculties and skills, altogether cut off from any knowledge of his own past? Why should he not similarly settle for making a fresh start and seek simply to build up for himself a new life in the context in which he now somehow finds himself? Indeed, may not time and energy spent in searching for his vanished past be merely time and energy lost for the better living of his life as it now is?

It may be that some amnesiacs do have to face up to just some recommencement. There is, however, a major difference between the relations that may or may not exist between the study of an existing discipline and that of its history, and those between an amnesiac's re-making of his life and any concern that he may have for the rediscovery of his past. In the first case the student, at whatever stage of his studies, is faced with an existing subject-discipline and its past; whether or not he possesses or seeks knowledge and understanding of the latter, neither his contact with his own past nor his

sense of self-identity is brought directly into question. In the second case the amnesiac's loss and consequent ignorance are directly reflexive; the question of his concern (or of his lack of it) relates directly to himself. This, of course, is much more than a simple difference of content of concern. To get on with one's own life – whether by way of continuation or of starting afresh – is to be concerned with one's own purposes for the future, a future that is in principle only understandable as one that is to become a present, a present that must in its turn recede into the past. Such is the necessary continuity of purposeful time; and all sense of purposeful future and hence of purposeful life must be lost, if there is continuously recurrent loss of all sense of connection between the three phases of one's own envisageable time. A man may, if he is sufficiently outward-going, survive one or, in the whole course of a life, perhaps even three or four attacks of near total amnesia. But in the end some at least limited sense of his own continuity through time is going to be strictly necessary not only to his own overall understanding of himself and of what he is about, but to his ability to act or even to think in any meaningfully purposive way at all.

Philosophy in History is in effect devoted to the question of whether the case of philosophy and its study is more like those of mathematics and chess or that of a man's concern with the intelligibility of his own life. It should go without saying that this is a topic of very great philosophical and, indeed, more general cultural interest and importance.

It has, of course, been generally characteristic of analytic philosophers that they should see themselves as committed to seeking solutions to essentially timeless problems. They recognize, again of course, that the identification, formulation and treatment of such problems have their various histories; they recognize that fully to understand why any particular past philosopher wrote exactly what and how he did one has to set him in the context of his own time; they may even acknowledge without strain that the same considerations must apply to any full understanding of why their own preoccupations and productions are what they are. But, they would say, it is one thing to study or to understand the particularities of any given philosopher's choice of problems and of his treatment of them, and altogether another

to study or to understand the nature of the problems themselves. The first belongs inevitably to their own particular time and place; the second have – in principle – no such spatio-temporal location, and to tackle such problems there is – in principle – no essential need to learn about the efforts made by one's predecessors. In practice one may, no doubt, find it helpful to study the clues they may have left behind them, and salutary to learn of the confusions into which they may have fallen so that one may be the better able to avoid them oneself. But while the treatment of a problem may have its history, the problem as such can have none.

Outside the analytic tradition – “on the Continent” as one tends somewhat inaccurately to say – the presently dominant views are both in theory and in practice almost exactly the reverse. There are no concepts, theories or problems existing somehow completely outside the history of their elaboration and development. The problems that confront any one generation result from the works of their predecessors and the pressures produced upon them by the changing conditions of society and its culture; and so on back. It should be evident that if one wishes seriously to tackle a problem, one must start by understanding what is involved; but this means to say that there can be no serious tackling of problems without a prior understanding of their history.

This contrast is not only notorious; it is by and large a real one. Inevitably, however, it is far from absolute; and it too has its own changing history. A substantial majority of the contributors to this volume have undergone a training in analytic philosophy, yet all – and they include the editors themselves – would seem, to one degree or another and in one way or another, to argue for the impossibility of separating out the pursuit of philosophy from the study of its history. Some would go so far as to call into question the very distinction with which we started, arguing that even the practices of natural science are, properly speaking, historical enterprises. Others are more inclined to see in the diverse make-up of philosophy some continuing role for the timeless (if one can put it that way) – though not, perhaps, for the timelessness of problems as such.

The list of contributors is an unusually interesting, powerful and distinguished one, and their collective production is undoubtedly well

worth reading, meditating and further discussing. Many will feel that some contributions may be read rather more rapidly than others. In fact, it appears that they were all of the first delivered as a series of lectures at the Johns Hopkins University in 1982-3, and some of them still seem to bear the mark of having been composed for an audience rather than for a readership; and – inevitably, no doubt – there are points at which the degree of mutual support that they bring to each other amounts to what for a collective volume begins to feel like a possibly redundant overlay. The editors have divided the lectures/essays into two Parts, the first including “more general reflections on the relations between philosophy and its history” and the second “particular case-studies . . . taken from ancient, early-modern and more recent philosophy”.

It is perhaps in the nature of the case that the limits imposed by a lecture should be better suited to the development of a case-study than to that of a more general reflection on a topic such as the relations between philosophy and its history. Be that as it may, even on specialists in the particular subjects of these case-studies here included may find most of them more lotenously absorbing than some of the more general reflections of even the most distinguished of the general reflectors. But not all of them; fan Hacking's, for example, is a typically crisp and stimulating piece. And then there are, certainly, others of considerably more than merely general interest (which is not to say that general interest may not be of itself interesting enough).

In the end, no doubt, there can be no doubt any proper weighing of the balance between the elements of the temporal and the non-temporal in philosophy's own best understanding of itself. But that is no more than to say that philosophy's self-understanding is to this extent at any rate like that of a man's concern with his own identity – committed to seeing some element of the non-temporal, or at any rate the trans-temporal, but also to the recognition of their inescapable temporality. What may happen to analytic philosophy when it comes to a full acceptance of this aspect of philosophy's own ever-recurring reflexivity is a question that this book raises but, unsurprisingly, does not resolve. But to say this is to utter no reproach. It is already sufficient merit to have helped to raise the question.

Home movies

David Robinson

ALEXANDER WALKER
National Heroes: British cinema in the Seventies and Eighties
 296pp. Harrap. £10.95.
 0245 54268 X
 RACHAEL LOW
The History of the British Film: Film making in 1930s Britain
 452pp. Allen and Unwin. £12.95.
 004 791042 9
 MARTIN AUTY and NICK RODDICK (Editors)
British Cinema Now
 168pp. BFI Publishing, 127 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0EA. £12 (paperback, £5.95).
 085170 130 2
 British Films, 1985
 Introduction by Sir Richard Attenborough
 102pp. Kodak/British Film and Television Producer's Association. Free.
 GEORGE PERRY
The Great British Picture Show (2nd edition)
 386pp. Pavilion Books. £12.95.
 0907516 65 3
 GILBERT ADAIR and NICK RODDICK
A Night at the Pictures: Ten decades of British film
 144pp. Columbus. Paperback, £4.95.
 0 86287 188 3
 PATRICIA WARREN
The British Film Collection 1896-1984: A history of the British cinema in pictures
 248pp. Elm Tree Books. £15.
 0241 1327 X
 JOHN WALKER
The Once and Future Film: British cinema in the Seventies and Eighties
 184pp. Methuen. £11.95 (paperback, £5.95).
 0 413 53540 1

“As the decade neared its half-term”, concludes Alexander Walker in *National Heroes*, “one could be forgiven for wondering whether one had been invited to attend a feast or a wake”. By now the euphoria that surrounded the New British Cinema has to some extent waned. The new Films Act of 1985 ended the Eady Levy on exhibition, which had hitherto made returns to producers of British films and subsidized the National Film Finance Corporation, the National Film School and the British Film Institute Production Fund. The NFFC has been wound up, to be replaced by a consortium representing private interests. The Island Revenue has begun to phase out the capital allowances scheme which encouraged the investment that was a major impetus for the “renaissance” of the early 1980s.

If the rebirth of British films has turned out to be a mirage, it is disappointing, but not unprecedented. In British cinema has always oscillated between confidence and crisis. Rachael Low's summary of the situation in the 1930s still aptly defines the enduring problem:

Financial considerations are fundamental to the story. Despite a persistent drain to Hollywood there has never been a shortage of film-making talent in Britain. It is a production industry that has been hard to find. The economic facts of life conspired against producers to make as much profit from their own home market as they could afford the best of everything; whereas their British counterparts, with a much smaller public near at hand, had to watch costs. Cost and quality are not synonymous, of course, and everyone can point to good low-budget films. But shopping in supermarkets is rare, and because British pictures had to be relatively cheap they suffered in comparison with their American rivals. A share of the American market, which would have made more lavish production economically viable, was denied to them. For, although tolerated British films enjoyed occasional successes in America, regular, nationwide circuit distribution of a fair rental was in the hands of the big Hollywood companies, who naturally saw little reason to assist their competitors.

What had happened at the beginning of the 1980s, though, was that opportunity – as it generally will – found new talent lying in wait. The most important source of that opportunity was the film-production programme of television's newly established Channel Four, which for the first time in decades provided continuous production – the certainty that a dozen pictures, however small their budgets, would be made in the coming year. The first Channel Four investments included the excellent *Remembrance of Angels* and *The Ploughman's Lunch*. The renewed initiatives of the National Film Finance Corporation, during Maitland

Hassan's term as managing director, made possible *Babylon*, *Gregory's Girl*, *Brianella Hospital*, *Moonlighting*, *Another Country* and *Dance With a Stranger*. The British Film Institute's Production Fund subsidized more idiosyncratic work such as Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *A Zed and Two Nothings* and Hugh Brody's *1919* – all co-funded by Channel Four. Meanwhile the number of Oscars won by *Chariots of Fire* and *Gandhi* restored long-lost confidence, as well as a belief that British cinema could be an artistic and industrial reality, thus enabling independent producers to find a footing.

It was all as invigorating as it was surprising, since Britain is practically the only European country without realistic government support for the cinema. It was astonishing in the light of the fact that in forty years attendance figures have dropped from around 1,500 million to 64 million a year; which was only to be expected, given what Quentin Falk in *British Cinema Now* calls “the putrid state of distribution and exhibition in Britain today”.

Just 1300 screens (ABC with 296, Odeon with 198, Classic with 132 and Star with 106 comprise the four largest units) in 700 sites, less than half the number in any other major European market; indifference to the consumer and reluctance to spend money; conversions done on the cheap; failure to get out new pictures fast and wide thanks to the monopolistic practice of “barriers”; forced queues; the appalling physical state of cinemas plus low-grade manpower; inaccessibility. A bizarre catalogue of complaints

In an article on distribution in the same book Archie Tait defines a curious paradox: “The fact is – though this is not shown in the existing statistics – that more people are watching more films than at any other time, including the heyday of the 1940s.” In any week, the British television viewer will be offered a choice of between thirty and forty films. The video shop offers hundreds more titles for rental for less than the price of a cinema seat. But while the audience is in reality larger than ever, the market no longer pays fair prices. The film industry perceives the situation clearly enough. If television paid a levy of a farthing per viewer for every feature film it showed, and a fair levy were charged on the sale of video cassettes – black or recorded – the film industry would never want for production funding again. Alas, government and video industry interests have so far successfully fought off this proposal.

The story of the British film is a mass of such paradoxes. The fact that Britain belongs to the largest language market, far from aiding access to that market, has more often resulted in attracting crushing American domination and colonization. Even though British films have invariably been most successful when they have competed on their own terms rather than trying to emulate American styles, few British producers have absorbed or practised that lesson. As Sir Richard Attenborough states in his Introduction to *British Films*, 1985:

Since the late forties and early fifties, the British film, as a genre has – with the notable exception of Ealing Films – suffered a tragic loss of identity. We . . . gave up our birthright by a process of compromise in ever increasing and ultimately self-defeating attempts to please the tastes of a world market. . . . When we proclaim our own views – be they of our society as it is today or of our past links with countries such as India – when our humour is British humour, then we are on firm ground. Perhaps we have rediscovered this simple truth.

There is also the persistent conflict between the City and the studios. The more film costs rise, the more intricate the process of film financing becomes; and the further divorced from the creative aspects. Most of these histories of the putative renaissance suggest that the money men, for all their caution, rarely manage to invest their money in the right film at the right time. The profits from that most “British” of British films *Chariots of Fire* went to the Americans and Egyptians who financed it when no indigenous investment was forthcoming. The disasters which punctuate the history of the British film industry have more often been the result of bad financial strategies rather than bad art.

Alexander Walker's *National Heroes* is easily the best record of these disasters – the switchback between success and failure. Taking up the story from his earlier *Hollywood England*, it chronicles the years since 1970. Walker is fascinated by the politics and econo-

mics of the business, the play of personalities, the place of anecdote and gossip; and for seven years he has had a grandstand view, as a member of the Government's Interim Action Committee on the Film Industry. In *National Heroes* he looks at the recent evolution of the British cinema within the context of the nation's history. He takes up the story in the exhausted, hangover period of the early 1970s, whose essential expression Walker finds in John Schlesinger's *Sunday*, *Bloody Sunday*; and follows through the upheavals, social and economic, of the years that followed. He sees the EMI adventure of the 1970s as symptomatic of the buccaneering spirit of finance that was then fashionable. Individual films reflect their times: *Chariots of Fire* and *The Ploughman's Lunch* in turn captured the exhilaration and the disillusion of the Falklands enterprise.

It is not always the mainstream films that most accurately reflect their times. Walker singles out Derek Jarman's shoe-string *Jubilee* as “a major film of the era”, the first work of art to define and analyse the chosen alienation of punk culture. A later film, Franco Rosso's *Babylon* (1980), offered an important “presentment that a racial underclass was in the making” but was restricted by the censorship that gave it an “X” certificate. A rooted indignation against British censorship which reflects national hypocrisies runs through the book.

Walker enjoys analysing personalities. His picture of Lord Grade, who so nearly became the last great tycoon, is fascinated and sympathetic, concluding that Grade was a great salesman who failed to understand what he was selling. He values David Puttnam's gifts as an impresario, and his refusal to let circumstances alter his personality or intuitions. Puttnam has given much – apart from all else, confidence – to the British cinema. Yet success and organizational genius like his can be a danger. The wild uncritical euphoria that followed the renaissance of the Swinging Sixties ended in the débâcle which is the starting-point of *National Heroes*. And the “national heroes” themselves have a perilous existence. When from time to time a Puttnam emerges, everybody lines up behind him and demands to be taken to the promised land. The Messianic role into which Puttnam and Sir Richard Attenborough have been cast is indicated by the number of these books (not including *National Heroes*) to which they have contributed prefaces, introductions or forewords.

Puttnam's foreword to George Perry's new up-dated edition of *The Great British Picture Show* brings out his personal combination of morality and practicality, well characterized in *National Heroes*. The moral aspect appears in his unexceptionable conclusion that:

Without doubt there exists a serious and urgent job that we have to tackle. It seems undeniable that much of the power of fantasy that exists today, the expectation of instant gratification, the commitment to selfhood over all, the waning concern for reason,

or disciplined achievement – is related to the cheap fantasy life so sedulously manufactured in Hollywood. Coming as it does from the United States, which has for the most part created the systems to cope with these expectations, this type of cinema (and television) is in my view creating long-term havoc in communities with different, sharper economic and social problems – countries like Britain in which these promoted expectations are increasingly unrealistic.

He gives a succinct and simple definition of a “three-way thrust” through which to create “the kind of strong domestic base from which we can expand”. The directions of thrust are:

1. The development of a “confidence” on the part of the financial institutions. . . . 2. The environment of opportunity will in itself create “confidence” in the film-makers. . . . 3. Neither the bankers' demands nor the film-maker's dreams must be allowed to override the “confidence” of the third and vital sector in this partnership, the audience.

In his introduction to *A Night at the Pictures* he is testier, railing at an alleged national distaste for commercial success, and arguing for a Thatcher-era success ethos. This book is a publication for British Film Year, evidently done in a hurry and reflecting small credit on the campaign. A lot of names are missing from the record; and those that are there are frequently misspelled. In their iconoclastic approach to the past of British cinema, the authors deliver a ferocious attack on Basil Wright's exquisite *Song of Ceylon* – mostly on the grounds that its young maker did not possess, fifty-two years ago, the attitudes and insights of 1985. Their argument is gravely weakened when they go on to attribute the film to Harry Watt.

Patricia Warren's *The British Film Collection 1896-1984*, a carefully annotated collection of stills purporting to be “A history of the British cinema in pictures”, manages to omit any mention of the documentary tradition which has been a major contribution to cinema culture, and central to the aesthetic trends of feature cinema. There is no reference to John Grierson, or Humphrey Jennings or Free Cinema, the influential movement out of which came Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson, the Swiss directors Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta, and much of the formation of the cinema revival of the 1960s.

Most of these books cover the same ground, but they vary in their parliosity. George Perry, for example, is diligent but confuses himself mostly to the mainstream, with no mention of Bill Douglas, Derek Jarman or other independent film-makers – though he does squeeze a place for Peter Greenaway and *The Draughtsman's Contract*. John Walker's *The Once and Future Film* is the most instantly likeable book, racy, not altogether accurate, including interviews with such refreshingly opinionated people as Michael Winner, and finding space at least for Derek Jarman. But in the end only the other Walker's *National Heroes* provides an adequate account of the perplexing world of the British film.

Visual aid

S. S. Prawer

H. M. BOCK (Editor)
Cinegraph: Lexikon zum deutschsprachigen Film
 Installment 2: 288pp. DM 35.
 Installment 3: 312pp. DM 42.50.
 Installment 4: 304pp. DM 36.
 Munich: Edition Text und Kritik;
 3 8887 173 2

The first instalment of this encyclopaedia of the German-speaking film was greeted with some reservations when it was reviewed in the TLS (September 24, 1984). Now the work is growing into an indispensable aid for all who are interested in the actors, directors, script-writers, cameramen and producers of the German cinema from its beginnings to the present day. Since the biographies and filmographies once again include work done by the film-makers in question in Britain, France and the United States, there is much material here for historians of the film outside Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Films made for television are listed and discussed alongside those

made for the cinema – an important item in the output of Edgar Reitz (whose *Haimm* receives most enlightening coverage in the third instalment); Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Wolfgang Petersen. A special feature, once again, are the critical essays appended to biographies and filmographies in important cases: these occasionally overlap the art theory (*Paris, Texas* is treated as a German film that Wim Wenders attempted to make in the United States; as though Sam Shepard had nothing to do with it), but are otherwise balanced and well researched, and succeed in showing the figures they treat as exemplary cases as well as individual artists. The fourth instalment contains full filmographies and thoughtful essays on such major figures as F. W. Murnau, Conrad Veidt and Werner Herzog. One desideratum: since film-makers often adopted different names in different countries, we badly need cross-references: Anton Walbrook was Adolf Wohlbrück, Paul Andor was John Voigt and Wolfgang Ziller, Ernst Dorian was Ernst Deutsch, and so on. But the team assembled by H. M. Bock, and the computer that is setting their work with hardly a hiccup, are earning the gratitude of film-lovers and research-workers everywhere.

Reasoning about nature

A. W. Moore

J. R. LUCAS
Space, Time and Causality: An essay in natural philosophy
 206pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £19.50.
 0 19 875037 9

John Lucas's express intention in this book is to elucidate the various rational principles on which we attempt to reach an understanding of Nature. These he takes to be *a priori* principles concerning the very structure of the physical world, its laws and operations. His rationalism is, however, mitigated by a crucial concession to empiricism, namely that we could always discover through experience that Nature flouts these principles, in which case (as he idiosyncratically puts it) “the world would be less rational than it might have been”. The Kantian flavour of the book is also thereby mitigated. For although much of its rationalist element is distinctively Kantian, especially in so far as Lucas focuses on the spatial, temporal and causal structure of the world; the book cannot be said to concern synthetic *a priori* knowledge, the chief Kantian hallmark. Rather, it concerns what we might term mere synthetic *a priori* belief, a much latter philosophical animal. Its most substantial theses turn out to be these: about how space, time and causality are regarded rather than how they actually are, still less how they must be. Nevertheless, the connections which are traced out between our beliefs are of profound philosophical significance and have a vital bearing on scientific practice. Overall, Lucas has produced a book which is both fascinating and stimulating.

An issue raised at an early stage is whether a

cause and its effect must be contiguous in space and time, as Hume supposed. This issue proves to be a linchpin of much of what follows. Lucas argues that one of the principles on which we operate is a refinement of the Humean principle that a cause must indeed be contiguous with its effect, namely that between a cause and its effect there must be a spatio-temporally contiguous intervening process by means of which the causal influence is propagated. This Lucas calls a “causal cord”.

From the point of view of a theoretical understanding of Nature, causal cords are more significant than any relation between their arbitrarily selected endpoints. Thus our ordinary talk of cause and effect, which focuses on such endpoints by treating of correlations between discrete, macroscopic, qualitative changes, although it reflects an obvious practical interest, is scientifically rather naive. (Other philosophers have expressed similar views, notably Russell, who wrote that “in a sufficiently advanced science, the word ‘cause’ will not occur in any statement of invariable laws”.) It is when we search for the general laws which underlie these crude correlations, and which regulate the intervening causal cords, that we aspire to scientific maturity. Such laws determine, by means of contiguous functions, what quantitative changes physical systems will undergo, in various specified respects over specified periods of time; give their initial states. Lucas urges that causal cords, which are to be met with in all places and at all times, set ineluctable constraints on how we can manipulate the world in such a way that they enjoy a certain four-dimensional solidity. As well as giving us licence to think of them as real, this also reveals how deeply the notion of a causal cord is connected to the

concepts of space and time.

Given this deep connection, however, there is some tension between the principle of continuity cited above and a second fundamental principle on which we operate, namely that spatial and temporal differences are causally irrelevant, or alternatively, that space and time themselves are causally inefficacious. This tension is a recurring theme of the book. Lucas argues that it is merely apparent. What we take to be causally irrelevant, when we adopt the second principle, is, putting it tentatively, the absolute location of a cord, not its dimensions. It is the relevance of the latter which underlies the deep connection referred to. So, for example, what happens to an egg immersed in boiling water depends crucially on the duration of the immersion, but not, *ceteris paribus*, on its occurring today rather than yesterday. Much of Lucas's book is concerned with spelling out the implications of these two fundamental principles, and of their joint adoption, for our beliefs about the topology of space and time. He is particularly concerned with questions concerning the homogeneity of space and time and the isotropy of space. Other topics which he deals with at length in the course of the discussion are induction, the nature of measurement and relationalism.

The book will be especially valuable as an introduction to these topics for anyone who has specialist interest arising from a knowledge of theoretical physics. Conversely, for anyone who does not have such background knowledge, but who already has some familiarity with the philosophical territory, it will serve as an excellent guide to how various fundamental principles of theoretical physics bear on central issues in natural philosophy. But the general reader with neither background, will probably

find that the amount which is presupposed and the pace at which the arguments proceed make the book bemusing. These assessments have to be made somewhat tentatively because of a general curiosity of the book. There is something bizarre about just what is presupposed and what is not, and about which arguments are spelt out in detail and which are not. More seriously, although there is a very careful explanation of what a group is, one of the chapters finishes with a flurry of unexplained and sophisticated group-theoretic apparatus. Again, although there is a painstaking account of how we can decide between rival general hypotheses using simple predicate calculus, which is an elementary enough matter, an interesting but highly controversial justification of induction is offered in only a couple of paragraphs. Still, it is reasonably clear at whom the book is aimed, and it is well aimed. I will therefore see as no criticism to conclude that the general reader is liable to find too much in the book which distances him or her from its important insights.

Philosophy and Practice (200pp. Cambridge University Press. Paperback, £9.95. 0 521 31231 0) edited by A. Phillips Griffiths is Number 18 in the Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series. It consists of fourteen essays dealing in one way or another with “applied philosophy”. Among the contributions are “Madness” by Anthony Quinton, “Wee you! Zygote?” by G. E. M. Anscombe, “Punishment, the new Retributivism, and Political Philosophy” by Tad Honderich, “Philosophy, Language and the Reform of Public Works” by Martin Warner, “The Right to Strike” by Don Locke and “Philosophy and Practice: Some issues about war and peace” by R. M. Hare.

